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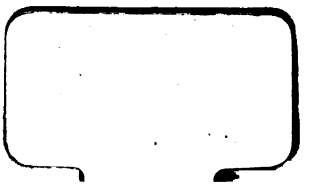
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HOW TO MANAGE IT.

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HOW TO MANAGE IT:

A NOVEL.

BY

ILTUDUS THOMAS PRICHARD

(LATE BENGAL ARMY).

'Quæque ipse miserrima vidi.'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.





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HOW TO MANAGE IT.

CHAPTER XX.

To describe the cause of this alarm that interrupted the different conversations related in the last chapter, we must follow Burleigh.

That gentleman, after leaving the house, proceeded down the cantonment road at a leisurely pace. It was some little distance to the lines of the 75th, and he had passed that part of the station, when his notice was attracted by a vociferous shouting of some one from the lines, from the neighbourhood of the parade-ground. At first he paid little attention to it; but upon its increasing in loudness and vehemence, and, as it seemed, by the addition of a number of new voices, he stopped his buggy and listened.

The uproar, for uproar it had now become, increased, and anxious to investigate the cause,

he turned down the first bye-road that offered itself. This road led down at right angles through that part of the lines occupied by the officers' houses. He had not gone far, before he saw evident signs of a panic. Inmates of houses appeared for a moment in their verandahs in all stages of dishabille and undress; then they rushed in, and were succeeded by others. The servants were clustering on the tops of the garden walls, or at the gates, all listening eagerly, chattering as fast as they possibly could at the same time, and many gesticulating by signs for the benefit of their neighbours on opposite walls and at opposite gates. By-and-by, like a flash of lightning, an officer on horseback dashed past, riding as if for very life towards the parade-ground. It was Dickenson, the adjutant. Then came another from another direction; the second was Graham.

'What's up?' shouted Burleigh as he passed at full gallop.

'Halloo, is that you?' said Graham, checking momentarily his horse, and turning his head round. 'I don't know—a row, that's all.' And on he went.

Meantime the noise increased. It seemed as if all the men had each suddenly obtained two tongues, and all were using them as fast as they could. Burleigh thought it must be

the 'mutiny,' and so thought others, as we shall see: they were but inexperienced in such scenes.

Burleigh now began to drive at a rapid pace; but he had not proceeded far, when he was startled and horrified at the sound of women's voices shrieking. The sound came from behind; he pulled up and looked; there were two ladies hurrying down the road, vociferating and gesticulating most vehemently. He had no difficulty in determining the identity of the two fair fugitives, whose pace seemed strangely and unusually impeded by their dresses. They were Mrs. Wetherall and her friend Miss Trinchinopoly. As they were calling out to him to stop, Burleigh could not be so ungallant as to drive on, leaving two elderly ladies running along the road after him in a noonday May sun, with a scorching hot wind blowing. They soon came up, and, breathless, pale, panting, dusty, and hot, and without a word of apology, or 'by your leave,' unceremoniously climbed into the buggy, one on each side, squeezed the owner of the vehicle between them as they squeezed themselves (and it was no easy task) into the seat, and telling him to drive on for Heaven's sake, burst into tears.

Burleigh, hardly knowing what to make of

it, did the best he could under the circumstances, obeyed the mandate and drove on. He was making the best of his way to the parade-ground, and had indeed by this time drawn very near it, when the ladies, pausing in their tears, asked where he was going.

'To the parade-ground,' said Burleigh, innocently enough, 'to see what all this hubbub is about.'

'To the parade-ground?' shouted his companions, both at once. 'For mercy's sake, don't go there; we shall be murdered, indeed we shall!'

'Let us see what the noise is about,' urged Burleigh.

'What the noise is about?—why, it is a mutiny! Don't you hear the sepoys' voices? I know they have murdered my poor husband before this,' said, or rather cried, Mrs. Wetherall. 'Drive away down this road, anywhere but there.'

'Really, ladies, I think you are unnecessarily alarmed. Even if it is a mutiny, let us hope for the best. The artillery will no doubt be down here immediately. But if you will allow me, I'll just run round the corner and see what really is the matter.'

They had now reached the bottom of the road; a few paces further on would have

brought them on the parade-ground. Nothing was to be seen from their present position. Whatever was going on was at a point near the lines, necessarily hidden from the party in the buggy by the sepoys' huts. There was a terrible noise of hundreds of voices jabbering and shouting, but nothing as yet more formidable.

The ladies tacitly acquiesced in Burleigh's proposal, so he pulled up the horse, saying, 'If you will be good enough to wait for me just a minute, I will run round and bring you word what is the matter: if there is anything serious and any danger to be apprehended, you may depend on my letting you know, and driving you off immediately.'

Suiting the action to the word, he politely handed the reins to Miss Trinchinopoly, and proceeded to extricate himself as well as he could from the entanglement of crinoline and starched petticoats that wedged him in on both sides. It was no easy matter to do this; but, believing himself at length clear, he stood on the edge of the buggy, preparing to jump off: jump he did, but, alas! his foot had caught in something belonging to Mrs. Wetherall's toilet, which was where it ought not to have been; there was the sound of a rent, and a faint scream, and Burleigh fell sprawling on the road, while a shower of

rupees rolled itself out from under Mrs. Wetherall's feet into the buggy, and then dropped into the road. The phenomenon was an unusual one, but there was not time to speculate on probable causes of extraordinary events; and Burleigh, who was not hurt by his fall, jumped up, and leaving the rupees still issuing from their hidden source and rolling about the road, ran off to see what was the matter on the parade-ground.

Just as he got round the corner, the hubbub ceased. All he saw was a very large crowd of sepoys, apparently all congregated together without their arms or uniforms in a space of ground between the quarter-guard and the huts. The officers were there, most of them on horseback and in uniform, and conspicuous among them all was the fine manly soldier-like form of Colonel Wetherall, who was sitting on his horse almost in the centre of the group, and evidently haranguing the men. There was no violence and no appearance of any, no disrespect to officers, no show of force, no snatching of arms; as the colonel proceeded with his oration they became quieter, till at length total silence prevailed, and Burleigh could hear, from where he was standing, the voice of the colonel, though he could not distinguish what he said. It was clear there

had been a panic and a hubbub, but nothing more. Matters had not proceeded very far, and the men were evidently quite under control; there was no danger—nothing to be apprehended. So Burleigh thought he might as well return to his buggy, and reassure the ladies, and get them home again. What was his consternation, in turning the corner, to find his buggy and horse gone! There was no vestige of it; only the rupees, still strewed about the road, marked the spot where he had pulled up the horse, and pulled down Mrs. Wetherall's petticoat purse strings.

To give the reader a little insight into the cause of this panic, and show 'how we managed' these things sometimes in the Bengal Presidency, it will be necessary to go back a little in time, even to the early morning of the day in question.

Ever since the intelligence of the outbreak at Meerut and Delhi had reached him, Brigadier Cartwright had been growing hourly more and more nervous. He exhibited no agitation indeed in public; but, as the old adage says, no man is a hero to his valet, so I fear it was the case with this gallant officer and his faithful Ramchurn. Many a time, when that intelligent domestic was engaged in washing his master's feet, and such other

little services which Indians of the old (and I am afraid too many of the more modern) school deem absolutely necessary to have done for them, by way of encouraging and elevating, I suppose, the native mind (it cannot be with a view of saving themselves trouble), did the brigadier attempt to fathom the secrets of his heart, and endeavour to make himself acquainted with the feeling of the native population.

'Well, Ramchurn,' he would say, 'what news?'

'Nothing but good news, sahib,' would be the reply.

'Are the sepoys faithful?'

'Why should they not be so? Is not the British government the same as a father and mother to them?'

'Undoubtedly, Ramchurn: but you see what have they not done at Meerut and Delhi? Do you think now they are likely to do the same here?'

'How could they be so ungrateful? the men under your command, sir, are so pleased and happy, that they would go on board ship and go to England with you, if you but gave the order.'

'Yes,' said the brigadier to himself, 'it is experienced officers such as I, that thoroughly

understand the native character, who alone can prevent mutiny and disaffection;' and then he would continue his conversation, flattering himself all the time that he was obtaining useful and correct information regarding the state of feeling and general topics of conversation among the men in the lines.

But Ramchurn very soon began to find a source of amusement opened out to him by these confidential discussions with his master, and it became his delight to dwell so frequently and forcibly upon the atrocities committed by the rebels at Delhi and Meerut, describing them even to the minutest detail, and illustrating his animated style by so much gesticulation and pantomimic action, that he generally left his master in a very upleasant state of nervous depression, a cold sweat breaking out all over him from apprehension and disquietude. On the morning of the day alluded to, and it was an eventful day at Islamabad certainly, this state of things had reached its climax; for Ramchurn, being either particularly maliciously disposed, or having an object in view, made his master's heart palpitate to such an extent as to be almost audible, for he informed him with much solemnity, and a most impressive air, that he had undoubted intelligence that a very

large body of the sepoys belonging to the 75th were prepared to mutiny, and had resolved upon making the brigadier the very first victim. The gallant soldier, on the receipt of this intelligence, cut short his toilet and sent over for Captain Barncliffe.

When the brigade-major arrived, the brigadier communicated the dreadful intelligence he had received, and asked the advice of his staff, saying, as he did so, that it was his opinion, provided the cavalry and artillery could be depended on, that they ought to disarm the infantry at once.

Barncliffe, who, as my readers will be aware, was by no means wanting in common sense and shrewdness, nor in knowledge of native character, had thought the matter over a good deal. At the stage the mutiny had then reached, it was the general belief that disaffection had tainted only the ranks of the regular army, and that the irregulars, particularly the irregular cavalry, might be depended on. Of the loyalty of the infantry there was of course reason to be suspicious; and if the artillery and cavalry would but act, there could be no doubt that to disarm the sepoys would be a politic measure. He therefore received the proposition with an intimation of assent, and after some further

discussion (held in the presence of course of Ramchurn), in which they talked over their plans, and so on, it was finally determined that the sense of the commanding officers should be first taken on the subject, and with their concurrence, which was certain to be given, the disarming of the 75th should be carried out the next morning. Captain Barncliffe then went home, to issue the requisite instructions.

He had not been gone long, before Ramchurn went too, to have his morning meal and smoke his pipe in the lines.

Left in solitude, the brigadier's mind immediately reverted to, or rather, I should say, continued to dwell upon, his now constant theme for reflection. This reverie was broken in upon suddenly and rudely by the sound of a horse galloping rapidly into the compound, stopping before the door, a clanking of steel scabbard and spurs as the rider dismounted, and a very loud voice demanding immediately to see the brigadier. There was no mistaking that voice; it was Captain Murray's.

The dashing 'sabreur' was not long in finding his way to his chief's presence, and he made his entree in his usual brusque manner, commencing his remark on the business in hand almost before he got inside the room.

'By Jove, brigadier, I've got some news to tell you: we must act—act at once.'

The brigadier's heart began to palpitate audibly; but he kept his countenance and his dignity, and requested his visitor to be more explicit.

'Two of my native officers,—they are coming here, they will be here immediately——'

'I don't wish to see them—I don't wish to see them in the least. You are the proper channel of communication, Captain Murray. Pray proceed with your information.'

'Two of my native officers have just brought me certain intelligence of a plot they have discovered among the artillery, to rise and murder the Europeans.'

'The artillery!' said the brigadier, almost committing himself by an evident start, but he checked it in a moment, and seemed indeed much less excited than his visitor. 'The artillery! well, this is strange. I thought they would be the last to mutiny.'

'So did I—so did we all, but it's true all the same. I saw the letter, the paper which they had all signed. To-day is the day fixed for it, too. I have only just heard in time.'

'The artillery unaided are not likely to attempt anything of the sort, Captain Murray. Artillery cannot act alone.'

'No, sir; but, by Jove, they won't be alone long—they will be joined immediately by all the blackguards out of the whole place. But I'll tell you what, sir, and this is what I am come to ask you; my men are faithful, true to the back-bone, loyal to their heart's core, and fit for anything; if you sanction it, I'll take them down, seize the guns—that is, disarm the artillery, and the station will be saved.'

'But the officers,' urged the brigadier, 'the officers—Captain Hornby must be consulted —I must send for Captain Hornby.'

Murray stamped with impatience—'Hornby! psha—he is infatuated, sir, mad—he does not know what goes on in his own lines: the danger is most imminent—a single word of this to Hornby would deluge the station in blood; the artillery are all ready—even now they are horsing their guns—there is no time to waste in sending messages which will only lead to endless discussion, and while we discuss all will be lost. My native officers urged me to come instantly to get your authority to act—in half an hour's time they assured me all would be lost; it will be too late—no natives fight without artillery—if we secure the guns we are safe.'

The brigadier was at first struck dumb with amazement at the idea of so bold a venture.

But, as he turned it over in his mind, the chief difficulties that seemed to oppose themselves in the way of such an operation gradually disappeared, and many manifest advantages began to appear, like the tops of mountains showing themselves on the subsidence of a flood.

If what Murray said was true—and he repeated it so often and with so many strong asseverations, and had such perfect absolute confidence in his own statement, that the brigadier soon began to think with him—by securing the artillery they would secure the station. The European officers, with a battery of six guns, supported by a wing of cavalry and a portion, at any rate, of the 75th Regiment—for it was not likely that all would be traitors—would be quite strong enough to inspire intended mutineers with awe, and trample out mutiny if it declared itself. Add to these considerations the effect which a blustering and confident man always has over a timid and wavering one, and the constant assurances Murray gave of his ability to perform the duty, and it is not to be wondered at that the brigadier came to think favourably of the suggestion, and finally acquiesced in it. Captain Murray, however, was fully alive to the value of foolscap, and accordingly re-

quested the brigadier to give him an order in writing. Pulling a writing-case that lay open on the table towards him, he wrote as follows:—

'BRIGADE MORNING ORDERS,

'By Brigadier Cartwright, Commanding.

'Islambad, May 31st, 1857.

'Captain Murray, commanding 19th Irregular Cavalry, is directed to take his wing down to the artillery lines, and place sentries of his own men over the guns of No. 10 Z. Battery without delay: the gunners will then be called upon to deliver up their small arms.

'C. CARTWRIGHT, Brigadier,

'Commanding at Islamabad.'

'Within an hour, sir, I will report to you that this dangerous and important duty has been performed;' and so saying, Captain Murray doubled up the order and put it in his pocket, and taking his helmet, walked out of the room. The brigadier was cheered by hearing him whistling jovially as he mounted and rode off.

CHAPTER XXI.

MEANTIME the news that they were to be disarmed the next morning, carried down by the faithful Ramchurn, flew like wildfire among the men of the 75th. They were well in hand though, and their leaders had complete mastery over them, so that some little time elapsed before any open demonstration of feeling was made. At last a messenger came running in, saying that the irregular cavalry on their left had suddenly received secret orders to get under arms. This looked suspicious; still the leaders did not act till they heard further. There was necessarily, however, a good deal of commotion in the lines; men were standing about outside their huts in the alleys and lanes talking together, and it was not long before the report got wind in the station among the officers' servants, &c., that there was something wrong. Among others it reached the brigadier, who was, as may be supposed, considerably discomposed on hearing it, and was about sending over

for the brigade-major, when a horseman dashed at full gallop into the compound.

It was Captain Hornby of the Artillery, who jumped off his charger, and hurried in breathless haste inside.

'For Heaven's sake, sir, lose no time,' he said to the brigadier; 'the irregular cavalry have broken out. I received certain intelligence that they were going to this morning, but could not act on it. In ten minutes' time the troopers will be galloping about the station sabring all the Europeans: give me an order quickly; my guns are ready horsed—I'll bring them down and check the mutiny at once. If they can be disarmed and their horses taken away before they have broken out, we may save the station; otherwise our lives are not worth a day's purchase.'

'Are you certain of your intelligence, Captain Hornby? Murray was with me a short time ago, and seemed perfectly assured of the temper of his men.'

'Murray's a fool—he is a brave, dashing soldier, but in all things else he is a mere child. I tell you, sir, my information is undoubted. I had it from the senior native officer of my troop, who came to me just before I came out.'

'Did he give you any proof, Captain

Hornby, of the truth of his statement?—for, after all, it may be a false report. Besides, I have heard very unfavourable reports of the temper of your men.'

'He showed me the very agreement, drawn up and signed by all the irregular cavalry officers; and here it is,' he added, drawing the paper out and showing it to the brigadier: it might have been an agreement or anything else, for what he knew. There was a preamble and then a number of signatures in the original in Persian writing.

'It was given to the subadar to get the signatures of the artillery; but he, like a noble fellow that he is, gave it up to me.'

'Can you read Persian character?' said the brigadier.

'I can make a word out here and there, and I can see there are genuine signatures here: there, see, is Abbas Alli, Meer Khan, and all the rest. The preamble talks about the Badshah at Delhi, and all the rest of it; he read it all to me, every word.'

'And what was it?'

'What I told you, sir,' replied the artillery officer, stamping with impatience. 'I beseech you give the order; it is the only thing to save the station.'

The brigadier was absolutely at his wits'

end. There was plain proof in this document, all the more awful to his eyes from being illegible, though he could make out a word here and there, and what he did understand certainly corroborated Hornby's account of it.

The effort to maintain an outward show of calmness and dignity, which, to his credit, I must say he had succeeded in doing very well, was too great a strain upon his mental powers when it came to be protracted. He grew bewildered, looked round for Ramchurn, then took up a bit of paper to write to Barncliffe and request his attendance. Hornby only grew more resolute and more importunate.

'Every moment is precious, precious as life, for it is life,' he said, and taking up pen and paper, Captain Hornby wrote out an order for the brigadier's signature very much resembling, *mutatis mutandis* of course, that given to Murray, and the brigadier signed it. 'I must send for Barncliffe,' thought he, 'and get these contradictory orders cancelled, all except the last, which must be acted on, of course.' So, as Captain Hornby was galloping out of the compound, a messenger was despatched to summon Captain Barncliffe. That officer was not at home.

The state of feeling in the lines of the 75th

was by no means tranquillised by the intelligence that shortly reached them, that the guns of Captain Hornby's battery were horsed. The leaders became confused, uncertain how to act. Was it really the case that they had been betrayed by their comrades, and were the artillery and cavalry really prepared to coerce them? It looked very like it. The men became more and more excited; many of the influential ones were heard to declare openly that they would not suffer themselves to be betrayed by their own leaders; even if the other branches of the service had proved faithless, they would take their arms, and stand in their own defence. Matters became momentarily worse; they ceased to trust one another—they could not understand the turn affairs had taken, nor could they divine the nature of the spring that had set all the works in motion; and so at last, under the influence of their fears, and thoroughly excited, they made their way in masses to the bells of arms, in which the muskets and accoutrements of each company were kept. The noise and confusion became tremendous.

It was very much the same in the artillery and cavalry lines; there too all was distrust and anxiety. Had they been ordered under arms to coerce the infantry, or what was it?

The general disquietude communicated itself to the bazaar, and non-combatant portion of the inhabitants of the station. In the bazaar, many of the shopkeepers shut their shops, packed up as many valuables as they could in small bundles, and left the place. Others determined to stay and defend their houses, families, and property to the last. Exaggerated reports speedily flew to the city; all was agitation there. It was evident there was something wrong in the cantonment, from the unusual hubbub that prevailed, which could be distinctly heard.

Before this juncture, Colonel Wetherall and his officers had arrived on the parade-ground. The men offered them no violence, still they were unmanageable. The sergeant-major exerted himself to calm them down and restore order; in vain—they demanded their arms, to defend themselves. 'They would not remain there to be slaughtered by the artillery and cavalry; they would protect their officers,' they said, 'and the colours of the regiment, but they would not give themselves up.' Presently a report got abroad among them that the cavalry had mutinied, and then with one voice they demanded to be led against the rebels. Their arms they would have! Colonel Wetherall, seeing a

crisis had arrived, rode in amongst them, and raising his voice to the highest pitch, implored the men to listen to him.

It was a long time before he could make himself heard; for full half an hour he sat in the midst of the crowd, taking advantage of every occasional lull in the tumult of voices to make his own words heard, and by degrees he succeeded in prevailing those who were the nearest to him to be silent. He then began to speak, and as he continued his address, one by one they ceased talking and shouting, till at length they were all silent, with the exception of that undefinable murmur which arises almost involuntarily from a crowd of excited men.

'Listen to me, sepoys,' he called out. 'You have known me for the last thirty years. Have I ever deceived you? have I ever wronged you? have I ever tampered with your religious superstitions and ceremonies? You have followed me before now bravely in action against the enemy; listen to me now when I require your attention. You have heard a great many reports in the bazaars and lines about what has occurred elsewhere, at Meerut, and Delhi, and other places; how the sepoys there have proved faithless to the British government, that never yet broke its word with them.

Some of the reports you hear may be true, but there is a great deal that is false: when did you ever hear a bazaar report that was not in great measure false? Now you have heard that the sepoys have destroyed a number of houses and killed many defenceless persons at Meerut; and at Delhi they have burnt down the station, and placed the pensioned king on the throne, in defiance of treaties and oaths of allegiance. But you have not heard what measures have been taken to coerce them; you have not heard that the commander-in-chief, at the head of a large European force collected from Subathoo, and Umballa, and Meerut, is on his way to Delhi. In a few days he will have arrived there; the place will be surrounded by British troops, by English soldiers, and the mutineers will suffer the punishment they deserve. You say you want your arms to coerce the irregular cavalry and artillery: they do not want coercion—they have not mutinied, nor have they any intention of disarming you.'

'We are to be disarmed to-morrow,' said a voice from the crowd, interrupting him.

'Yes, yes,' shouted half-a-dozen others; 'we are to be disarmed to-morrow: the brigadier's servant told us.'

'It is false,' roared Colonel Wetherall; 'and

he who says so, lies to you. Would the brigadier order you to be disarmed without telling me, your colonel? I swear to you he has never spoken one word about it.'

'We are to take the cartridges,' shouted another, a deep angry murmur following the words from the whole crowd, like the soughing of a stormy wind.

'It is false,' again roared the colonel. 'The stories you are told in the bazaar, are told you by designing men who want you to commit yourselves by acts of violence which you would be sorry for afterwards, just to suit their own purposes. Let the native officers swear to me on the Koran and the Ganges water that they will be true to their allegiance, and I will swear to you on the Bible of the Christian, which you know is a binding oath to us, that no one shall force the cartridges on you against your will. Let the native officers come forward. There, Thakoordeen Tewarry, I see you among the rest: come forward, and you, Dabie Deen, and you, Sheikh Fyzoolla, and you, Mahomed Khan, come forward.'

The officers, thus addressed by name, and pointed at by the colonel while he was speaking, could not well resist the appeal, and came forward. He then sent the serjeant-major to his house, which was in the right corner of the lines

close by, to fetch a Bible, and despatched the pundit and the moulvie of the regiment for the Koran and the Ganges water, which latter is always kept in a small vessel by the pundit, ready for purposes of worship. It may be as well to add, that every native regiment was provided with a pundit and a moulvie, paid by government, for the purpose of giving instruction respectively to the Hindoos and Mahometans in their religion, and such literature as the classes in the regimental school might aspire to. In addition to this, they acted as the priests of the religion each professed, administered oaths, &c., according to the forms observed.

While they were gone to fetch them, Colonel Wetherall, who had now fairly gained the ear of his audience, continued to address the men, and flattered himself that he had really recovered his influence, which at one time seemed hopeless and for ever gone. When the Bible was brought, Colonel Wetherall took it in his hand, and holding it up high before the crowd, he said —

'There, you see this Bible, this book which we Christians believe to be the word of God. I will swear, and I do swear, upon it that your religion shall never be interfered with: you shall not be forced to use impure cartridges.

So help me God,' and he kissed the book ostensibly before them all. There was a slight murmur of satisfaction; a few men whispered to one another, 'The sahib has sworn, his word is true,' but those who spoke were in the minority.

The native officers now came forward, and they also took an oath dictated to them by the colonel, the Mahometans placing their hands on the Koran, which was held before them by the moulvie, who stood in front, and the Hindoos likewise laying their hands upon the little vessel of Ganges water brought by the pundit. They swore to be faithful to the British government, and to use their utmost influence with the men to keep them to their duty.

If this ceremony had done no real and permanent good, it had at any rate so far acted favourably that it served in a measure to divert the attention of the men, and to allay the terrible state of excitement they were in. The tumult ceased, and they began by twos and threes to drop away from the main body and return to their lines. The colonel lingered about, talking first to one, then another, as long as there were any men left standing on the spot, and then slowly wended his way on horseback through the centre of the lines,

followed by a few of the officers, towards his house. As they emerged upon the cantonment road, one of the officers came galloping up from the direction of the cavalry lines.

'Do you know, sir, it was true after all, the cavalry had turned out and were under arms: they are so now, I saw them myself.'

'Did you indeed? Were the officers with them?'

'No, I did not see any. I know they turned out without orders, for I met Barncliffe just this moment and told him, and he said, 'What the deuce have the cavalry turned out for without orders?'

'It's very strange—but there is Barncliffe;' and as the brigade-major came in sight Colonel Wetherall rode off to meet him.

'What's up, colonel, in your lines?' said Barncliffe.

'Nothing now, it is all quiet; but the men were excited. They said the cavalry had mutinied, and were determined to march against them; there is a splendid spirit in my regiment—the men are staunch, loyal to the back-bone. Some of them said they were to be disarmed by the cavalry, and they would not be disgraced. Fine soldierlike spirit—but is it true that the cavalry really turned out to mutiny?'

'It looks like it, by Jove. They've turned out, that's clear enough—and it seems very like mutiny—certainly they had no orders.'

'Did you see Murray?'

'Yes, but he is worse than the men. I asked him if he had orders, and he warned me out of the lines. He shouted out, "By Jove, sir, if you come here, I wouldn't answer for your life."'

'Then I suppose the men have seized him, determined, probably, to protect him, but not spare the rest.'

'Yes, yes, no doubt that is it—he must be a prisoner in reality in their hands: they will protect him, I don't doubt; but the attitude assumed by the regiment is serious, very serious indeed. Do you think there is much community of feeling between your men and the cavalry?'

'None in the world—on the contrary, my men would act against them to-morrow.'

'Are you sure?'

'Certain—the native officers have just this minute all sworn on the Koran and the Ganges water to be faithful. I'd trust them with anything.'

'Do you know, colonel, I wish you would come with me to the brigadier—I'm just going to him to report this affair about the cavalry.

I think the best thing will be to march your corps down and disarm them—don't you?'

'I do indeed. I would strike while the iron's hot, too; the men have just got their pluck up, and they are annoyed at having been threatened: besides, they wanted to march of their own accord against the cavalry just now.'

'All right, then; there is no time to be lost, let's off;' and the two galloped up to the brigadier's. Captain Barncliffe had no difficulty in intimating to his commanding officer not to divulge just now the subject of the day's brigade orders, and proceeded to report the state in which he found the irregular cavalry. Colonel Wetherall then reported what had taken place in the lines of his regiment, and dwelt forcibly on the admirable spirit of loyalty evinced by his men, and how anxious they were to be led against the cavalry. The brigadier understood, better than either of the other officers present, the reason of the irregulars being under arms, but he did not like, in the presence of Colonel Wetherall, to let it appear that he had given Captain Murray orders to turn out his men in so unusual a manner without sending them formally through the brigade-major. Besides, Captain Hornby's report was then fresh in his recollection, and

putting the two things together, and Captain Barncliffe's having been warned out of the lines, the brigadier easily concurred in Colonel Wetherall's suggestion that his regiment should be called out at once and be marched down to the cavalry lines to disarm the mutinous irregulars, and rescue their officers. Captain Barncliffe, accordingly, penned the brigade orders, and Colonel Wetherall was about to proceed to put them into execution, when they heard a horseman gallop up to the door, followed almost immediately by a second.

In walked Captain Murray, flushed and heated, and close upon his heels Captain Hornby.

'I came to report, sir,' said the first, as soon as he had got inside—'my men refuse to obey orders, and wouldn't march.'

'It's precisely the same case with mine,' said Hornby: 'when I gave the word "At a trot, march," they refused to budge an inch.'

Murray looked rather surprised. Captain Barncliffe, in his blandest manner, said,

'May I ask, Captain Murray, where you were going to march to? I am not aware of any brigade orders having been issued, directing your regiment to proceed anywhere on duty.'

'Where to march to!' said, or rather shouted,

Murray, his hatred to Barncliffe absolutely boiling over when he was forced to address him. 'Why, to disarm the artillery, of course.'

It was now Hornby's turn to be indignant. 'Disarm the artillery, sir! why, I hold in my hand an order signed by Brigadier Cartwright, directing me to proceed at once with my whole battery to the lines of the irregular cavalry, and disarm the men and bring away the horses;' and suiting the action to the word, he drew forth the order and laid it on the table before them all.

'And here are my orders, sir, to take my wing and disarm the battery, place sentries over the guns, and bring away the small arms of the gunners;' and he laid his order on the table alongside of the other.

Barncliffe looked puzzled, but he enjoyed a joke, so while the two captains were glaring at one another like enraged tigers, he said quietly,

'Gentlemen, there has been some misrepresentation here: if you allow me, I will read the brigade orders.

'"Islamabad, Brigade Orders, May —, 1857.

'"Captain Murray, commanding the 19th Irregular Cavalry, and Captain Hornby, commanding No. — company, — battalion Foot Artillery, with battery attached, are directed

to proceed to-morrow morning, an hour before daybreak, to the parade-ground of the 75th Native Infantry, and disarm the men of that regiment with as little disturbance as possible."'

'What!' roared Colonel Wetherall, absolutely foaming with passion.

'Here is a subsequent order,' continued Barncliffe, not heeding the interruption, 'directing Colonel Wetherall, commanding the 75th Native Infantry, to proceed at once to the lines of the 19th Irregular Cavalry, and disarm the men of that regiment. Both orders to be issued by circular, but entered on record.'

Having read the order, Barncliffe looked up and smiled complacently on the astonished hearers.

The brigadier was one of those men one sometimes meets with, who make up for a vast amount of absolute incompetency by a certain degree of dignity in bearing and behaviour—on occasions. My readers will, perhaps, have little difficulty in calling to mind other instances of this peculiarity in public men. Perceiving the ridiculous attitude of affairs, and how severely such a state of things reflected on his own conduct and aptitude for command, he took refuge in his assumed dignity and said,

'Gentlemen—you see here the necessary results of over-confidence in your own information, and distrust of that of others. Misled by each of you in turn, I have been induced to lend a too credulous ear to your reports of disaffection and the necessity for immediate action, and to issue orders which, it seems, have not been carried out, owing to your inability to carry them out, and which thus, when they come to be placed side by side, present an appearance of having a contradictory tendency. I must request, gentlemen, for the future, more attention to accuracy of detail and correctness in matters on which you think it your duty to submit reports to me. We will now consider the orders suspended, and will deliberate before taking any further step in the matter. I shall feel obliged by your remaining carefully on the watch as to the conduct of your men, and tranquillising their minds as much as possible. Should you ever require a really faithful and trustworthy person either to give information or communicate privately with natives of any class, I shall always be glad to send Ramchurn to you for the purpose. And now good morning.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE three commanding officers left the brigadier's house together. Captains Murray and Hornby went to their respective lines to see after their rather refractory 'babas,' or children, as they called their men: they found, to their surprise, that they had of their own accord relinquished their attitude of preparation, and were employed, most of them, in cooking their mid-day meals. The explanation of their conduct readily afforded by their native officers and spokesmen was, 'that they had got under arms under a mistaken idea altogether, that they were to be called on to act against each other; knowing that the whole thing arose from a mistake, and that the sahibs would, with their godlike powers of perception, certainly discover the error immediately, they had considered themselves not only justified in resisting the order to march, but bound to do so: as for their loyalty to the British government, who ever doubted that?'

Thereupon the two officers, having ordered a hundred rupees' worth of sweetmeats to be distributed among their men as a mark of their approbation of their conduct, and a symptom that their kindly feelings towards them were in nowise diminished, returned to their homes much gratified by the result of the day's adventures—as far as they had gone.

Colonel Wetherall, however, on reaching home, was dismayed to find that sad havoc had been made with his lares and penates since his departure. The furniture in the room was disordered; his wife's drawers and the boxes in her dressing-room looked as if they had been rifled and turned inside out; and as for the ladies themselves, there was no vestige of them to be found. He called the servants, who declared, with much concern, that they did not even know the ladies were gone out. The gallant colonel was at his wits' end to know where his wife and his wife's friend could possibly be gone to; so, tired as he was, he had to order his carriage and set out like a second Cœlebs upon the search. That the reader may know what had really become of the two ladies, I must retrograde a little in my narrative.

When the two ladies found themselves alone

in the buggy after Burleigh had left them to see what was going on, their fears multiplied rapidly. The means of escape were within their reach. Their protector had doubtless fallen beneath the knife or bayonet of an assassin the instant he passed from their view round the corner. Why should they remain there to be massacred too, when they held the reins, literally, not metaphorically, and had but to drive off to place distance, at any rate, between them and those who were doubtless seeking their lives? Reflections of this nature passed rapidly through each lady's mind, and they were not long in communicating them to each other. There was no dissentient voice. 'Let us fly. Why should we not? Poor young man, he's dead by this time, depend on it.'

'Can you drive?' asked Mrs. Wetherall of her friend.

'Oh dear, yes.'

'Let us go, then;' and away they went down the first road that offered itself leading in an opposite direction from the lines.

Burleigh's horse was a spirited animal, and the noise and tumult made it restive: besides, there was something in the general excitement that pervaded all the station which communicated itself somehow to the brute

creation, and the two unprotected ladies had not driven far before the horse fairly got the bit between his teeth and bolted. The road was straight, straight as an Indian cantonment road; I can think of nothing straighter to compare it to; there were no obstacles, carts, carriages, gigs, or omnibuses in the way, so the increased speed of the horse was clear gain to the excited fugitives, who had no eye to any danger except that they felt behind in the vicinity of the sepoys' lines.

So on they went speedily, if not merrily. The animal's pace, however, increased rather than diminished; and as they fled by garden-gate, and bungalow after bungalow, it began to occur to the ladies that their straight road would soon come to an end, and then what were they to do? Indeed, this consummation seemed not very distant, for they could now distinctly see that it did end, and that in a dead wall, the road branching off exactly at right angles to the right and left. There was no hope of their being able to turn so sharp a corner at the tremendous pace they were going at; nor had they the least power over the horse, or presence of mind to attempt to exercise it. It was getting very exciting; nothing, it appeared, could save them from an inevitable smash, and that in a very few minutes.

And here a philosopher would have found a way to some mysteries of the female mind. At any other time, had these ladies been run away with in a buggy, they would, without the smallest doubt, have gone off into hysterics, or fainted, before the horse had got fifty yards. Now, however, so strong was the counteracting tendency of the fears they had before harboured, that they faced the real danger calmly, while they fled from an imaginary one almost demented from excess of terror.

As the distance, however, between them and the wall diminished rapidly, and the inevitable smash became momentarily more certain, the two ladies began to realise their position; and the reader may judge of the gratification they experienced at seeing a figure on horseback emerge from a garden-gate in front, between them and the dreaded terminus. The figure on horseback, for it was not easy to distinguish what sort of figure it was, glided out of the gate, and when it saw the buggy approaching at railway speed, gallantly and resolutely planted itself in the centre, holding out what seemed to be a spear in rest, like a knight-errant preparing to receive cavalry.

This hostile movement was not lost upon

the horse. The animal had had enough galloping with a buggy and two ladies in it behind him, or else did not like running upon the spear pointed against him; so before it reached the spot, it began of its own accord to lessen its pace. Miss Trinchinopoly tugged hard at the reins, and succeeded in pulling up just as they passed the horseman.

'Oh, Dr. Mactartan, is that you? — how thankful we are you came out just then! we should certainly have been dashed to pieces if you had not come out. Oh, it is dreadful! Such an escape!' said Mrs. Wetherall.

Her companion, thinking this an excellent opportunity to faint, leant back against the cushion and went off.

'Faix!' said the doctor in broad Scotch brogue, 'I see you want some water. Drive in, Mrs. Wetherall, drive in quick.'

Mrs. Wetherall took the reins and drove in after the doctor, who led the way. By the time they arrived at the door, Miss Trinchinopoly had, however, recovered. This was fortunate, and a great relief to Dr. Mactartan, who had already been considering how he should set about getting her out of the vehicle in her senseless state.

The doctor, having given his horse to a servant to hold, and laid aside his spear, now

hastened to assist the ladies to alight, and invited them warmly to take refuge in his house. He had, he said, one or two good hiding-places made expressly for occasions of this sort. There was no doubt whatever that the sepoys would be coming round soon, burning, slaughtering, and plundering; and it was exceedingly desirable that the ladies should conceal themselves. Eagerly did they avail themselves of the offer: indeed, it seemed as if, in the person of Dr. Mactartan, Heaven itself had interfered in their behalf.

When the doctor appeared in the road, I have said he was a formidable-looking personage. Armed he was to the very teeth. First of all, he had two revolvers in his belt; a very large dragoon's sword in steel scabbard; a huge hunting-knife, the blade of which was full a foot in length; a long hog-spear, which had already proved so useful; a double-barrelled gun; and last, though not least, a very heavy walking-stick, with a most formidable-looking knob at one end.

Fully prepared as he was for offensive warfare, he was not the less prepared for defensive. He ushered the two ladies inside his house, assuring them he would defend them with his life; but that there would be

no danger, provided they made no objection to taking advantage of his hiding-places.

'Now, Mrs. Wetherall,' he said, placing a chair before the mouth of a large thermantidote that stood in the verandah, but had its mouth in the drawing-room, 'do me the favour to get into this. I have another hiding-place for Miss Trinchinopoly.'

Mrs. Wetherall looked at the height she had to climb from the chair to the mouth of the hiding-place, then turned round nervously: she was half inclined to abandon it, but the sounds of the tumult from the bazaars at the moment increased, and all doubts were dispelled instantly. With a convulsive jump, and a clutch aided by a scream from herself, and a push from the doctor and Miss Trinchinoply, she succeeded in scrambling into the interior of the cooling apparatus.

It was well adapted indeed for a hiding-place, and had been built with that intent by the worthy doctor, who set about it in that spirit of caution which is the peculiar characteristic of his race, immediately after hearing of the disbanding of the mutinous regiments at Barrackpore.

The interior part of the apparatus consisted of three wooden fans springing from

the axle in the centre. These, when set in rotatory motion by means of the handle, or occasionally a multiplying-wheel, gave a continuous draught or stream of air through the mouth, which opened through a hole in the wall into the room, the apparatus itself of course standing in the verandah. These fans were so disposed as to admit of a person of ordinary dimensions lying at the bottom of the thermantidote, where the figure was effectually concealed from the view of anyone looking into the mouth, while a khus-khus tatty or screen fixed on each side for cooling the air, which was drawn through them by the draught occasioned by the rapid circular motion of the fans, would effectually shut out from view on either side any person concealed within. So that, provided nobody turned the handle (and to prevent this the handle had been purposely removed), or set the machine in motion, it was as good a hiding-place as could be provided.

Mrs. Wetherall having pronounced she was all right, the doctor took Miss Trinchinopoly's hand, and led her away to a staircase which communicated with the roof of the house. The doctor's domicile was a flat-roofed building.

When they reached the outer air, they

found themselves on the roof of the lower or side apartment. The centre room, as is generally the case in houses of this sort, was several feet more lofty than the surrounding ones; consequently, they had an ascent of about six feet yet to make to reach the summit. This was accomplished by means of a moveable bamboo ladder. 'Now,' said the doctor when they were both on the top, 'you see this is my plan. We conceal ourselves under the parapet, where no one can catch a glimpse of us from below, and draw up the ladder: not seeing any ladder, it would never occur to mutineers that there could be anyone up here.'

His companion expressed her gratification at the security of this hiding-place, but remarked that if they remained there during the heat of the day she would certainly be struck down by *coup-de-soleil*, which was, to do her justice, not at all improbable. So they descended again, and got under shelter on the staircase, where they were in a position to observe all that went on below, and to make a hasty retreat to the top of the house if it should become necessary.

Dr. Mactartan was set down by the world as being decidedly not a marrying man: but here the world was, as it very often is in

such cases, wrong. Not that his ideas on the subject of matrimony were very practical, or very well defined; but whatever ideas he had were connected in some way or other with Miss Trinchinopoly.

Subsequently, when his *penchant* for that lady became known, malicious tongues circulated the report that it was in consequence of this lady being the only person in the world in whose case his love of research into the family matters of his neighbours had been fairly baffled, that he entertained the design of making her his own, and so wiping off the stain upon his escutcheon. The doctor was by no means what you would call an ardent lover; indeed, he generally avoided ladies' society as much as possible, and was dreadfully shy; so it is not to be wondered at that his advances towards Miss Trinchinoply's affections had been very slow. The present was an opportunity not to be thrown away. Indeed, he found his companion, as the two sat together on the top step, so communicative and confiding, that he felt a good deal of his shyness wear off, and after they had been seated in that interesting position about a quarter of an hour, he found himself talking with her as freely and unreservedly as if he had known her all his life. Many were the hints and

attempts the sly doctor made to worm out of his companion something about her former history; but they were all unavailing. He was obliged afterwards to confess himself completely vanquished: not a word, not a syllable escaped her; she did not make even the most distant allusion to either her father, or her mother, or her place of birth, or the number of years she had been in India, or what friends and connections she had, or what she had been doing all her life till now, or her intentions for the future, or anything at all about herself: she remained, as she always had been to the doctor, an impenetrable mystery.

We must now, however, return to Colonel Wetherall, who was looking all this time for his lost family. As at the very same time Burleigh was looking for his lost buggy, it was very natural they should fall in with one another.

'I say, Burleigh,' called the colonel, as soon as he saw him on the road, 'have you seen my wife?'

'Hulloo, colonel, is that you? have you seen my buggy?' exclaimed Burleigh at the same moment.

'Why, man, what does it matter about a buggy being lost? My loss is a much more

serious matter. Mrs. Wetherall has allowed her fears to get the mastery over her, and has bolted somewhere or another.'

'True enough, colonel, and in my buggy.'

'In your buggy? what business had my wife in your buggy, sir?' asked the colonel with mock indignation.

''Pon my life, you must ask her. She and Miss Trinchinopoly both got into my buggy in the height of the panic, without my asking; and now they have gone off with it, leaving me a victim of my own dependence upon feminine honesty.'

'Too bad, upon my word,' said the colonel, laughing. 'But how came you to get out and leave the ladies in possession?'

'I got out to take a look round the corner, and see if it was really true, as Mrs. Wetherall's fears suggested, that you were a cold and bloody corpse.'

'You are too bad—too bad, Burleigh,' said the colonel, not relishing the joke and the uncomfortable ideas it was associated with. 'But see, we can trace the marks of the buggy-wheels in the sand. Look here; down here they went—and, by Jove! what's this? why, rupees—as I'm a sinner!'

The colonel stooped down and picked up three or four rupees as he walked along.

'You are in luck to-day, colonel, not only escaping the sepoys, but picking up rupees in the high road: strange, isn't it? Mrs. Wetherall must have dropped them on purpose to give you a clue to her hiding-place.'

'Why, here are more, I declare. Ah! I see how it is: they brought away a bag of money with them no doubt in their flight, poor things, poor things, and it got unfastened.'

'No, colonel, it wasn't a bag,' said Burleigh.

'How do you know, sir?' said the colonel, turning sharply round at him.

'Oh, I don't know—of course; but what I mean is, I didn't see a bag.'

'Well, then, they had them in their pockets, I suppose. Is there anything extraordinary in ladies under such circumstances carrying money in their pockets?'

'Oh, certainly not, none in the least.'

They were now fairly in the trace of the fugitives, and of course easily found out the house they had taken refuge in, for Burleigh recognised his buggy in a moment. They went in: all seemed silent and deserted.

'No, they are not here, Burleigh; they must be hiding in an out-house.'

'Perhaps they are gone next door.'

'Ah, yes, or they may be here somewhere.

'Julia!' added the colonel, calling his wife's name aloud—'Julia!'

'Yes, George, is that you?' replied a gentle voice—from some place, but where the colonel could not divine.

'Gracious Heaven! where in the world is she? Julia! Julia!'

'Yes, George.'

'Where are you?'

'Here.'

'Where the deuce is here?'

'Who's that?' cries a voice from the staircase.

'Who's that?—why, it's I, sir,' cried the colonel, stamping with vexation. 'What the devil have you been doing with Mrs. Wetherall?'—it was very seldom the colonel used strong language—when he did, it was a sign he was very much put out.

'Here I am, George,' reiterated Mrs. Wetherall, in a louder voice than before.

Burleigh was leaning against the sofa, holding his sides, convulsed with laughter.

The master of the house had by this time appeared on the scene. He came in, followed by Miss Trinchinopoly, blushing up to the roots of her hair.

The colonel turned upon him wrathfully; he did not see his companion enter at first.

'Where are the ladies, sir?—this is beyond a joke!'

'Joke—faix and there's no joke about it, colonel!—leddies hiding for their very lives, and you call it a joke!'

'Ha!' said the colonel, now catching sight of Miss Trinchinopoly; 'so you have been concealing this lady in your bed-room, I suppose.'

Miss Trinchinopoly, who was at this moment standing close by Burleigh, on hearing this speech of the colonel's, went off straight, falling into Burleigh's arms.

'Pray, have you taken Mrs. Wetherall there too?' continued the colonel.

'Oh, George! how can you talk so!' said his wife's voice again.

The colonel looked round, enraged.

'I am sure you are most unjust to Dr. Mactartan, and very unkind to me,' continued the unseen speaker, beginning to sob audibly.

'Will you show me where Mrs. Wetherall is, or will you not?' said the colonel, advancing towards Dr. Mactartan in a threatening manner.

'I've been going to show you ever so long, but you won't let a man speak, with your

blather and scape, can't ye hear your wife crying for your bad language?'

'Julia, dear! where are you?'

'Here, here, in—the—ther-man-ti-dote,' said the voice, broken with sobs.

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed the husband, going up and gazing into the aperture, 'so you are—what an excellent place of concealment! Excuse my hasty temper, Dr. Mactartan. Now, my dear, let me help you out—there is no danger now—the sepoys are quite pacified.'

Getting into a scrape is often easier than getting out, as I dare say many of my readers know. So it was with the thermantidote. The 'descensus' was 'facilis!' not so the 'ascensus,' for that had to be made up an almost perpendicular concave and smooth wall of wood, against the obstacle of the fan. Mrs. Wetherall indeed reminded one very much of a squirrel in one of those round cages you see little boys with in the streets; only her cage did not go round, but remained stationary. Not so the fans, however: as fast as she scrambled up a little way, pushing the fan in front of her, down came the other fan behind, squeezing her toes between its edge and the case, and making her give up her hold. Down she slipped to the bottom again, and down

came the front fan with an impetus, giving her a tap on the head as a reminder that the internal works of a thermantidote are not to be trifled with lightly.

'Turn the handle, colonel,' said the doctor, taking him outside and fixing on the iron handle. 'Gently—so, gently. Now, ma'am, give me your hand, please;' and so, aided by force from behind, the lady was lifted up towards the mouth of the apparatus, when, seizing the doctor's proffered hand, she made a vigorous effort and scrambled on all-fours on to the horizontal ledge.

A chair was brought, and, by the united exertions of her husband and the doctor, the lady was safely landed. Explanations followed, and Miss Trinchinopoly, finding people paid her no attention, but left her lying alone on the sofa on which Burleigh had deposited her, came to, and sitting up, joined in the conversation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE rapid reaction from a state of panic to one of quiescence and confidence that I am about to describe, may be regarded by the inexperienced reader as too great an improbability to be allowed even in the pages of fiction. But it was nevertheless the case at Islamabad, that two hours had not elapsed since the beginning of the panic described in the preceding chapter, before the station was quieter than it had been for a very long time before. People felt as if the crisis had come and gone. If the sepoys had been intending to mutiny, they surely would have broken out then; they had been wrought up to a state of the utmost excitement, yet they had not only allowed themselves to be calmed and quieted, and shown themselves to be most amenable to reason, but had given fresh and undoubted proof of active loyalty; even their apparent misbehaviour had arisen only from excessive zeal—there could no longer be any doubt that the bulk of them were to be depended on.

Several of our friends had an engagement of some days' standing to dine with Mr. Dacres that evening. The occurrence which caused the panic of course had driven all thought of the engagement out of their heads: it was only late in the evening, when the sun was nearly setting, and Stevens and his wife, with Murray, were walking about the garden discussing the events of the day, that the recollection of the engagement recurred to their minds.

'By the way, dear, we were engaged to dine with Dacres this evening; we had forgotten all about it. What's to be done? shall we put it off on account of the absurd panic, or do you think we ought to go?'

'Will Mr. Dacres expect us, do you think?' asked his wife.

'What do you say, Murray?'

'Really, I see no possible excuse for not going, except the long distance, and the bore of dining out.'

'But is it safe, do you think, to leave cantonments?'

'Safe? why not?—Oh, those sepoys! pooh, pooh, man, why you are safer than you have been for the last six months. This little ebullition to-day has acted as a safety-valve; all the excitement and nonsense has effervesced

off; depend upon it, we shall hear nothing more of the Islamabad mutiny—as long, that is, as the old brigadier Ramchurn will leave the men alone: if he takes to worrying them, I wouldn't answer for the consequences.'

'You are too hard upon him, Murray, indeed you are! That nonsensical affair was more Barncliffe's fault than his.'

'There is a pair of them: and, upon my soul, if there ever was an excuse for men mutinying, it is the brigade here that has it. But about Dacres—I'll go and ask my wife: I know she'll go—and we'll go if you will.'

'I hardly like to go so far and leave the children,' said Mrs. Stevens, as Captain Murray ran into the house to consult his wife. 'Suppose anything should happen?'

'I really think, my dear, that, looking at the thing calmly, we must be of opinion that there is less danger of any disturbance than ever there was before,—that is, since this excitement began. I really think it would do you good to go out, and Amy too: we shall be away a very short time, you see. He won't dine till eight, and we shall come away at nine or half-past. I want to speak to him, too, very much, about what has occurred, and see if Harley has come back, and what news there is.'

'Oh, I'm not afraid if you think it is safe to go; but after the fire that night,—and altogether it is natural to feel anxious. However, we'll make it an excuse for coming away soon; and if we are back by half-past nine, we shall be away but a very short time. Let us go.'

And they went. The party was a small one, however, for several who had been invited from cantonments had refused, being unwilling to leave either their posts of duty or their houses. Besides the party from Captain Murray's house, which made five, there were only Mr. Dacres, Mr. Thurston, Graham, and Burleigh.

Harley had not come back. Colonel and Mrs. Wetherall had refused to go; so had several others.

It would be tedious to describe the dinner; it was like most dinners of the kind, and very nice dinners they are, such as we see to advantage in India, where the party is a sociable one, and all ostentation, formality, and nonsense are excluded by general consent, and everyone tries to enjoy himself and please his neighbour. Burleigh kept the table in a roar of laughter by his description of the scene with the two ladies, and the colonel's search for his wife; then Murray told the story of

the scene at the brigadier's, where all the commandants met, and each produced his order to disarm the other men. Mr. Dacres, however, looked very grave while this episode was being described, and seemed to think it no laughing matter, but rather like playing with edged tools.

Mr. Thurston was delighted at the 'beautiful traits of native character accidentally developed by the day's proceedings,' and in allusion to Colonel Wetherall and Captain Murray's manner of treating their men, and the evident influence they had gained over them, remarked that had the regiments at Meerut, Delhi, or elsewhere, been commanded by men of that stamp, there would have been no mutiny. This immediately led to an animated discussion on the origin of the mutiny, and Lord Canning's policy in disarming the sepoys at Barrackpore. The ladies had left the room, and the gentlemen, having it all to themselves, fell to, and the argument waxed strong. Mr. Thurston, however, had—at least he fancied he had, it all his own way, and lectured his opponents as if he was speaking, as, indeed, he was in his own estimation, *ex cathedrâ*. 'You may depend upon it, gentlemen,' said he, 'and I speak with the advantage of several years' experience of Asiatic

character—nay, of the whole human race, and with the advantage too of having been able to watch recent events in this country, and the working of the system of administration which has led to these results, from a more distant and more just point of view than any of you; —I say, with this experience and these advantages, that I am perfectly certain that to guide the helm of the state in India only requires ordinary prudence and common sense: to control the people, the lower classes, the soldiery, requires leniency, gentleness, and mildness; even your criminal punishments in this country are far too severe; your treatment of the natives, at least the treatment of most men of your class (for of course I do not speak of individuals), most harsh, revolting—nay, even cruel. These men have been faithful to us for upwards of a century, they have built up an empire for us. They have fought for us, bled for us, died for us; they have always evinced the utmost constancy, the highest devotion, the most unexceptionable, unimpeachable loyalty; they are staunch and true, so long as they are properly managed, and there is no nation on earth I would trust sooner than I would these ——'

'What's that?' said Graham, rather abruptly interrupting the member of parliament.

'The evening gun,' said Burleigh, taking out his watch.

Stevens looked across the table at Dacres. The latter was pale and thoughtful.

'How very odd! that is the second time they have fired the evening gun,' said Murray.

'The third,' said Graham; 'I counted two reports before the last.'

There was not much doubt what was the matter. Wild and breathless, several servants rushed into the room, and gazed at the gentlemen seated at the table in a kind of meaningless way, half in wonder, half in terror. Mr. Dacres's head-servant, a grey-bearded old Mussulman, came up and whispered something into his ear: the same instant, the voices of the ladies calling from the next room summoned the gentlemen away. They went in, passed through the drawing-room and out into the verandah, where Mrs. Stevens, Miss Leslie, and Mrs. Murray were.

'O God! James,' said the former, as she leant against her husband almost fainting, 'the children, the children!' and a convulsive shudder shook her frame, till her husband was obliged to hold her tightly in his arms to restrain its violence, at the same moment that he whispered into her ear words of hope,

and confidence and encouragement. Alas! they were but too empty.

Shall I attempt to describe the scene? I must do so, but I feel how far short my best efforts must fall.

Mr. Dacres's house was built on slightly-elevated ground. From the verandah, which was semicircular, in which the group were standing, both the cantonments were visible on one side, and a good part of the city on the other to the extreme right. The front was taken up with the different gardens and houses of wealthy natives. The space between them and the cantonment was open cultivated ground, interspersed with groves of mango and other trees. The night was not quite dark, for there was a moon a few days old, but it was dark enough to afford a vivid and fearfully striking contrast to the scenes that soon met the eye of the spectator from the verandah. The same noise, tumult, and confusion that had sprung up so suddenly during the day was now repeated, only magnified tenfold. Suddenly, as if by magic, it arose, when the booming of the third signal-gun at nine o'clock, the usual hour for gun-fire, had sounded the knell. The reader in India may have seen, after a sudden and heavy shower of rain, a pond which before

was dry, become, all at once, filled with an animated moving mass of frogs, of all sizes and ages, each croaking with all its might and main. The water seems alive with them; it appears a mass of frogs, croaking, screaming frogs, and nothing else. So it was here, on an infinitely magnified scale. Every human being in the city, and within a circuit of five miles of the city, seemed suddenly possessed with an unaccountable determination to make a noise. All the servants and hangers-on, chuprassies, &c., in Mr. Dacres's household and premises—and they were no small number—were jabbering and chattering as fast and as hard as they could. The noise of voices from the city was something tremendous: you would not have believed human voices could have made so great, so terrible a tumult. All the space of ground between the city and the cantonments seemed alive with human voices, while from the cantonments itself the sound, mellowed by distance, came borne along the sultry evening breeze like the subterraneous rumbling of a volcano, or the distant growling of a tropical thunder-storm. The booming of the heavy guns at intervals sounded more like the firing of minute-guns, or signals of distress from some ship in a tempest at sea, than anything like a real

engagement; but the frequent rattle of musketry told too plainly that the artillery were not only being used for signals. First one, then another, then a third, then too many to be counted, rose the blaze of flaming bungalows, the church, the bazaar, the lines. Even so far off as Mr. Dacres's house you could hear—or it might have been fancy, you seemed to hear—the roar of the flames as they leapt, danced, curled, revelled in this work of destruction among the dry combustible fabrics of the thatched roofs.

It is needless for me to dwell upon the feelings, the fears, the fancies of the little group who watched this terrible scene: no words of mine, no language from the pen of the most brilliant writer that ever lived, could depict a millionth part of the anguish felt by two at least out of the number. There is one place only in which scenes something similar to this have been portrayed, though in prophetic signification, in language at all adequate to the subject, and that is in the pages of Holy Writ. Vividly, when gazing on such scenes, have those passages recurred to me, as if I beheld before me their actual realisation.

The deepest, most harrowing anxiety was felt by all—anxiety that was scarcely bearable,

to hear what had befallen the officers and others in cantonments. Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Murray were the images of utter woe and despair. One glance at the agonised expression of those pale features, on which the moon was shining with a faint sickly glare, would have impressed them indelibly in your mind, never to be effaced, and with such force that for a time you would have felt as if it were impossible ever to smile again. 'Why did they leave their children?' was the cry they sent up to Heaven from their hearts—an exceeding bitter cry, a cry of anguish, and of cutting self-reproach, unheard except by Him to whom the faintest breathings of the human heart are audible. Human reason was powerless in such a frame of mind, nor could they ask themselves 'What could we have done had we remained with our little ones ?—for there is no protection save from above. O God, surely thou wilt shield them from harm!'

There are some seasons when in the midst of danger and of death the mind can find space, leisure as it were, for prayer—for that raising of the soul to God by a vigorous and active effort of the whole powers of the mind and spirit, of the intellect and the feelings, which alone is worthy the name of prayer.

On the deck of the wrecked ship, in the pitchy darkness of a stormy night, surrounded by the roaring, hissing foam of a tempest-tossed ocean, the lost mariner may find time to pray; but in times of intense action, or when thoroughly prostrated by a tremendous blow, the mind may be too unhinged to concentrate its faculties at all for any prolonged appeal to the Source whence alone, in such seasons, deliverance or support can come. Yet in times like these—happy they who never knew them!—the appeal may spring from the sorrow-stricken soul to its Maker in one short impulse that shall penetrate the void 'twixt earth and heaven with a speed that puts the lightning-flash to shame.

Where were the gentlemen of the party all this time? The scene has taken long to describe, but it was short in action. Dacres was calm and self-collected; so were the rest in a degree, but he was especially so. Murray was clear-headed, though excited; he was the first to plan, the first to act on his plan.

'Come,' said he, addressing Stevens, who was standing for the moment as I have described him, with his wife locked in his arms, when she fell on his breast, at the first, struck by the suddenness of the blow, and the agony of the reflection that her children were in the

midst of that dreadful scene, and she away from them,—'Stevens, you can be of more use here; Graham can go with me. You, Eliza, love, stay with Mrs. Stevens. We'll do all mortal men can do. Cheer up; I have every confidence in my orderlies. Thank God, Stevens, your children were under our roof.'

Stevens did not feel as if he could respond to that very well. He saw, however, the wisdom of Murray's counsel. There were three ladies—they might be attacked any moment; some one must remain with his wife and sister, and, oh, bitter thought! he must trust his children to the protection of others. It was no time for words; he wrung Murray's hand; that grasp said as plainly as lips could have done, 'Go, my good fellow—you are right.' Three minutes afterwards, the sound of three horses galloping along the road towards cantonments told the rest that they were gone. Burleigh had accompanied them with orders from Dacres to bring him a report of what was going on, and to give notice to as many as he could that the Nawab's palace garden was the place of rendezvous. Having seen them off so, and left Stevens in charge of the house and the inmates, now reduced to the

three ladies, Dacres took Mr. Thurston with him and hurried out to superintend the measures he had before resolved upon in the event of an emergency like that which had now come in its full force.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Captain Murray, mounted on one of Mr. Dacres's horses, and accompanied by Graham and Burleigh, rode as fast as they could go from the commissioner's house to cantonments. They met with no opposition whatever on the road: they passed, indeed, a good many groups of natives, who seemed to belong to the class of shopkeepers and others, and who, accompanied by their wives and children, and carrying such goods and chattels as they could get together in a hurry, were making the best of their way towards the city. But they passed no armed men, and no sepoys. Every step that they drew nearer to the burning station, the cries and tumult became louder and louder —the roar of voices, the crackling of burning rafters, the peculiar sound caused by raging flames, which may be likened to the roar of the waves on the sea-shore, mellowed by distance—the reports of firearms, the booming of guns at intervals, and shrieks, cries, shouting, and devilish laughter, all combined; it

seemed like hell let loose. When they entered cantonments, they parted; Burleigh going one way to carry out as best he could his orders, and the other two dashing along the road at full speed toward the irregular cavalry lines and Murray's house. Even along the cantonment centre road they met very few people. The smoke and heat from the burning bungalows was intense—almost suffocating, and the danger from sparks and large masses of burning wood, straw, and other combustible material, constantly hurled to some distance across the road by the force of the falling timbers, not inconsiderable. Nearly all the houses seemed to be in flames; and in many there were forms visible flitting in and out of the burning domiciles, carrying away valuables, or searching for them. A few shots were fired from behind garden-walls and shrubs at the two officers as they galloped along; but to them they paid no heed: intense harrowing anxiety to know the worst kept them straight along their course. At last they neared the goal. But ere they turned down the road leading direct to the house, Graham pulled up suddenly.

'What's the matter?' said his companion.

'There are three bodies in the road—and see, one is moving.'

'They stopped and looked. One was the body of an officer, dead: by him lay two sepoys, one dead, the other writhing in his last agonies.

'It is poor Jackson,' said Graham: 'but see, he had done for two of the devils before they finished him.'

'Let us on,' said Murray; 'we can do no good here:' and on they went.

With a father's anxiety to learn the fate of his child amid such tremendous scenes, Murray waited not to go round by the gate, but leaped his horse over the garden-wall. Graham went round and galloped in through the open gate. The horses were excited and maddened with the noise, the glare, and general confusion. Just as he entered the gateway, he saw that the whole garden, at any rate all the road before him, was strewed with boxes, tables, chairs, and all the miscellaneous contents of the house, strewn about in disorder. Before he could rein up or guide his horse, its foot came between the legs of a heavy sofa turned up on its side, and the animal fell heavily, throwing its rider to a considerable distance: the latter alighted on some thick shrubs, and got up unhurt. He turned to his horse; the poor beast lay helpless, its leg broken.

'One chance of escape cut off,' thought Graham, as he turned to look for his companion.

Murray had been more fortunate; his horse, accustomed to being ridden across country, had cleared the wall beautifully. The first thing that attracted Murray's notice, as he approached the house, was the figure of a man, apparently a sepoy, standing with a musket directed to the edge of the thatch. He drew his sword—for in those days no one, not even civilians, went about without their arms—and rode up in time to bring speedy vengeance on the head of the incendiary, but not in time to avert the consequence of his act. Almost all the houses burnt by the sepoys in the mutiny were fired by the muzzles of their muskets being placed close to the edge of the thatch, and the trigger pulled when in that position. The man had done the deed: the thatch caught fire, just as Murray rode up, and with one blow of his sword cleft the incendiary's head in two, and laid him low. He fell with scarcely a groan. Murray dismounted, tied his horse securely to a tree, and then rushed into the house. Graham at this moment joined him; they made their way together first of all to Mrs. Murray's bed-

room. The beds were there, and the little baby's cradle, but it was empty.

'Good God! my child!' exclaimed the agonised father, in tones no pen can describe.

'Look out,' cried Graham.

At that instant a figure advanced towards them from the outside. It was one of Murray's troopers.

'It is well, sahib,' said the man; 'the little baba is safe.'

'Ha, Futteh Khan! is that you—where is the baba?'

'Akbar Ally took him off, and the other sahib's babas too. He told me to remain here and watch till the major sahib came: he would be sure to come, he said, and to tell the sahib he had taken the children off to the commissioner's house. Now, sahib, go—there is danger here: the English rule is gone.'

'Stay, Futteh Khan; where are you going? Follow me. I'll give you five hundred rupees for this, and make you a serjeant on the spot.'

The man paused and turned, for he was in the act of leaving the room. He laughed, but there was no disrespect or insult in his tone.

'No, sahib,' said he—'you have always been kind to me, and so I did Akbar Ally's bidding, and told you where your child is;

but I cannot follow you. I must go and join my comrades:' and, shouting 'Deen! deen!' the savage enthusiast rushed out of the house with one bound, and fled towards the lines.

'Let us see what mischief has been done,' said Graham. 'The flames will not come through yet; we may save something, perhaps.'

They turned to the other apartment; at the door of Stevens's room they paused and looked.

There were two ayahs, Mrs. Murray's and Miss Leslie's, engaged in ransacking a number of drawers and boxes they had dragged in from the other rooms, containing Mrs. Murray's wardrobe. One had put on a rich flounced silk dress, the other a white embroidered muslin one, and a lace mantle over her head: their necks and arms were adorned with everything in the shape of necklace and bracelet they could find; the floor was strewed with fragments of finery, dressing-table ornaments, wreaths of artificial flowers, and bits of dresses, ribbons, bonnets, mantles, and all sorts of miscellaneous articles of apparel collected from the rifled sanctum of a lady's wardrobe.

It was a grim and grotesque scene, a strange mixture of tragedy and comedy. The two

women were so intent on their spoil, that they were deaf to all external sounds; and great was their horror when startled from their work by the sound of the officers' footsteps close upon them. With a scream they jumped up: one got away; but the silk dress so impeded the motions of the other, that Murray caught her before she could get through the door. To force her to strip herself of her borrowed plumes, and then push her after her companion, was the work of an instant. They passed on to the next room, threw open the door, which was carefully shut, but paused at the threshold transfixed with emotions the most conflicting at the sight they beheld. There, calm amidst this terrible scene of hellish malevolence, in the very jaws of destruction, with the roof above him in flames, tranquilly sleeping the sleep of infancy, and the picture of beauty and innocence and purity, on his little bed, lay Georgy Stevens. His head lay on his fat round arm, and his long light golden hair on the snowy pillow, breathing calmly and composedly as if in his mother's arms.

Their feelings were too strong for utterance: but in one instant it flashed across Graham's mind, that the trooper had spoken of Akbar Ally's having taken away only one

child besides Murray's little baby. 'Thank God we came in here,' was his first thought.

Scarcely had they had time to realise the fact of the child's narrow escape, when a bundle of white, that was huddled up in the further corner of the room, became suddenly endowed with the faculty of life and motion, and up started little Georgy's ayah. She looked at the two officers, then at the sleeping form of her darling, and then, with a wild cry of happiness and relief from a burden of anxiety and fear that had weighed down her soul to the lowest depth of despair, she rushed across the room and threw herself at Murray's feet.

'Thank God, thank God, he is saved, he is saved!' she cried, weeping passionately from very exuberance of joy.

'Tell us, Joomma,' said Captain Murray, scarcely able to speak coherently, 'what has happened—how is it you are here? did not Akbar Ally take the child?'

'Ah, no, sahib; Akbar Ally was very good,' he said. 'I can only carry two, the two little ones; you stay here. The sahib is sure to come back if he be alive; stay here and watch the baba. I've told Futteh Khan to remain and watch the house, too; and tell the sahib, when he comes, that I had saved the

two little ones. The eldest, he said, was safe. God would protect him, and so he has, for has not the sahib come to take him?—now I will go forth and die.'

'We've no time to lose, Graham,' said Murray, recalling to his mind the necessity for immediate action. 'I'll take little Georgy on horseback; do you take old Joomma, if you can, up behind you, and let us be off. God grant we get safe out of the station with our burden!'

'Alas!' said Graham, 'you must go alone, Murray. My horse broke his leg as I rode into the compound. Never mind; I feel so happy at our having saved this little fellow, that I don't care for anything else: indeed, I feel quite jolly. Come along; take him up and be off. Never mind me; I'll take care of myself and join you: if not, you'll know the reason why. Here, give him to me to hold, while you mount.'

Imminent as was the danger, and pressing the necessity for instant departure, Murray, who had the child in his arms, could not deny the faithful old nurse a last embrace. She absolutely threw herself on the child, and kissed it as if she would breathe out her very life and soul in that last kiss. It awakened the sleeper, and it began to cry. Murray

snatched it up, as Joomma withdrew her arms with a heart-breaking sob, wrapped it in the sheet, and hurried out.

To give the child to Graham to hold, to mount, to take it again, was the work of an instant. The flames had made head, the rafters were falling, and fire scattered all round, above, below. 'Now off, and God protect you, Murray!' cried Graham, as the irregular cavalry officer, with a burden he and his charger had never borne before, fled out of sight.

Graham turned to Joomma. She had thrown herself on the ground again, transformed into a lifeless bundle of white.

'What are you doing there, Joomma? Do you not see the fire is falling all round you? Get up; you will be burnt.'

'Ah, sahib! that is what I want. Let the bungalow fall upon me! I wish to die—my mistress is gone; and the young lady is gone too, and the darling baba: why should I live? The world has come to an end—we shall all die—why should I go?—it is fate.'

'Nonsense, Joomma—get up; your mistress is safe, and the little boy is safe too by this time. No one will harm you: you can go about without fear. Make haste and go down to the commissioner's house, and join your

mistress: she will be delighted to see you, and will reward your devotion. Go, Joomma, —go.'

'Is my mistress there, indeed?' said the old woman, revived to hope of life by the thought of seeing her again.

'Yes, of course she is—all safe and well; and she will want you badly to help take care of her and the children. 'I'll go there too directly I can: but we will not go together; for if you are found with me, you will be killed—but alone you will go safely.'

'I'll go, sahib,' said Joomma, rising.

'And tell the young lady, Joomma, how glad I was to find little Georgy, and not to be afraid. 'I'll be there, I dare say, as soon as you.'

'Yes, yes, I'll tell the missy baba—may God protect you, sahib!' and away the old woman went, walking unhurt through the falling fire, like a salamander.

CHAPTER XXV.

GRAHAM now turned to think seriously of providing for his own safety. The first thing, as he had to go through the place on foot, was to disguise himself so as to escape easy detection. The dead body of the sepoy lying on the ground before him at once suggested the means of doing this. Without more ado, he dragged the corpse out into the garden, away from the fire, by the feet, and then stripped it, and dressed in the sepoy's coat, trousers, and accoutrements. His face was already pretty well blackened with dust, smoke, and dirt; he would pass muster well, he thought. There were several rounds of ammunition in the pouch; so he fixed the bayonet on the musket, loaded it, placed his own sword conveniently so as not to impede his movements, felt that his revolver was all right and loaded, then 'shouldered arms' and walked away.

With the view of avoiding the risk of breaking his shins among the loose boxes and

furniture that were strewed over the road, Graham chose the garden as his route of exit; and it was fortunate he did so, for just as he reached the wall he heard the sounds of bodies of men and horse approaching. One party, apparently horse, were coming up from the direction of the lines; the other, consisting as well as he could see of about a hundred sepoys on foot, were marching in great disorder along the road at right angles.

The roads met just outside the wall under the angle of which Graham stood concealed effectually in shade and shrubs. The two parties confronted one another within a yard or two of the spot he was standing on; he could therefore distinguish with ease and certainty the words that passed between them.

'Who goes there?' was the challenge given by the officer in command of the irregular cavalry.

'Friend,' was the reply, given in English.

Both parties halted, when it became apparent at once that the infantry were by far the stronger of the two. They seemed to become alive to the fact, for the mutineer in command, who was dressed in the full uniform of some officer whose house had been plundered, and mounted on a first-rate Arab 'realised' from the same source, now took upon himself the

initiative in challenging. Riding forward, he demanded in a tone of authority who the horsemen were, whence they came, and whither they were going.

'Going, by order of the brigadier, to the bazaar, to restore order, and protect the inhabitants from being plundered,' was the reply.

'What brigadier?' said the other.

'Brigadier-general Gunga Singh Sahib Bahadoor.'

The questioner did not seem satisfied; he turned to his men and called out, 'Left wheel, quick march.' This movement was effected with very tolerable military precision, and resulted in bringing the company of infantry up facing the handful of troopers, and directly in the way of their onward progress.

'Ek deen, ya do deen?'* now demanded the infantry officer.

'Ek deen,' replied the other, without a moment's hesitation.

'All right,' said the officer to his sepoys, in Hindustanee, and wheeling up the two centre sections, he made way for the cavalry to pass.

* 'One religion, or two religions'—the watch-word or test applied by the mutineers during the rebellion to all doubtful parties.

The two parties then proceeded on their respective roads.

'Ha,' thought Graham, 'I have by this accident learned something that may be useful. "Ek deen"—I shan't forget it.'

As soon as the road was clear, he got over the wall, and bent his steps first of all toward his own house. He met no one on the way; the same scenes of desolation by fire, and the same results of the wanton destruction of property of every kind, met his view everywhere; while the same din and tumult reached his ears from the direction of the lines, as had attracted his notice on first entering the sacked cantonment. His own house was nothing but a mass of smoking ruins; nothing seemed to have escaped. There was nothing to be got by remaining there; so, as the brigadier's house was close by, he determined to explore in that direction, to see if he could learn anything about the old gentleman's fate, of which, on account of his childish trust in Ramchurn, Graham felt serious misgivings. He was anxious to meet with Burleigh, or with any party of fugitives whom he could join; and he was as likely to get tidings of them in the direction of the brigadier's house as anywhere.

Just as he turned the corner and entered

the brigadier's garden through the gate, he suddenly found himself in very uncomfortable proximity to a considerable band of sepoys, all engaged in taking down and carrying off the flag and flag-staff, which stood opposite the commandant's house; the flag which 'had braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze,' metaphorically—identically, the same piece of bunting which had braved the hot winds and the night-dews of Islamabad for a period of ten years, ever since it was issued to the brigadier's indent passed by order of the Military Board from the Delhi Magazine in 1847. The poor flag was now destined to be carried off in triumph by the mutineers, as a token that the power of Great Britain had fallen, and the senior military authority of the Islamabad Brigade had been transferred from the person of Brigadier Cartwright to that of Brigadier Gunga Singh Sahib Bahadoor, from the top of whose tent-pole it was destined for the remaining term of its existence to fly.

So unexpectedly had Graham come upon these men, that to have halted or hesitated in his advance would have at once raised suspicion. The only course was to brave it out, and test the efficiency of his disguise—at the worst, if discovered, well-armed and agile as he was, and befriended too by the darkness of

night, and the facility of concealment among the houses and gardens, the chances were in favour of his escape. So, he screwed up his nerves, for the moment was a nervous one, shouldered his musket in the best *négligé* Pandy style he could adopt, and, with the pride and swagger of a Bengal sepoy flushed with victory, advanced boldly towards the group. His disguise was good; they scarcely noticed him, did not even put him to the test of a challenge. He passed close to them, and pretended to be much interested and amused at the work they were engaged in as he went by.

Unmolested and unchallenged, he reached the house. Like the rest, it had been gutted, and was in ruins dangerous to enter, for the fire still burned fiercely in parts. He turned and went round to the back of the house with a view of seeking egress in that direction, not wishing to subject himself unnecessarily to the chance of detection by passing the group of mutineers in the garden a second time.

There was a long range of outhouses behind the brigadier's bungalow, built for the use of his servants; and as the old gentleman was always most attentive to the comfort and welfare of his domestics, the row of huts consisted of buildings very much larger and superior in

every way to those generally adapted to this purpose. As Graham went by, his attention was attracted by a light in one of them; the others appeared deserted, and the whole premises empty, but the huts had none of them been set fire to. Creeping up cautiously to the door of the one in which the presence of a light betokened occupation, he looked in; and there—engaged in the genial work of rifling a number of trunks which literally covered the whole floor, and which contained all the brigadier's valuables, in the shape of best clothing, jewellery, plate, &c. &c. — was the faithful Ramchurn. A little oil-lamp on the ground beside him shed a glow of light on the swarthy features of the trustworthy Hindoo, and rendered the scene really picturesque, though, accompanied with the associations it was inseparable from, grotesquely horrible. The gleam of delight which played in the man's bright eyes, and the savage pleasure which was expressed by his open mouth, and grin of devilish satisfaction, as treasure after treasure appeared from its hiding-place — treasure to the thief of almost countless value — and the covetous, greedy clutch with which he grasped each article and scanned it to test its value, placing those he thought worth keeping on one side, and

casting aside the rest; all this would have made a subject for Rembrandt to delight in. Graham longed to discharge the contents of his loaded musket at the villain, but he feared to attract attention, and, after watching the man a short time, turned away, and continued his progress steadily and cautiously towards the open ground at the back of the house.

He had not taken many steps before he came across something on the ground; it was like the body of a man dressed in white. He advanced and looked—it didn't move; doubtless it was a corpse. He turned it over—for it lay on its face—and started back with horror, for there lay before him, his sightless eyeballs glaring in a fixed stare at the sky above, all that was mortal of poor Brigadier Cartwright. He had died in pain, for there was an expression of agony on the countenance that told too well the nature of the attendant circumstances under which the immortal spirit had parted from its earthly tenement. But the dress! he was clothed in native dress; the costume of a head-bearer. The secret was revealed: the brigadier had been induced to trust his villanous factotum to the very last—had, no doubt, at his instigation, disguised himself in his clothes and left the house: betrayed by the man he had petted

and pampered for thirty years, he had fallen by an assassin's hand: a deep wound on the abdomen and chest made with a knife or sword showed how he had met his death.

'It is too much,' thought Graham; 'I must avenge his death, come what may.'

Ramchurn's days were numbered now; the accident of his victim having been stumbled upon by the intruder sealed his fate. Graham, unwilling to risk more than one shot, preferred using his revolver to his musket, and so advanced close to the door. Even then his blood recoiled with disgust at the thought of slaying an unarmed, defenceless man. He raised his hand and let it fall again, and turned to move off: there, glistening in the pale moonlight a few paces from him, lay the body of the murdered officer; again he felt nerved to do the desperate deed. He took his aim and fired—and the soul of the murderer fled to confront the spirit of his victim before the throne of his Maker.

Aware that the report of the pistol would most likely attract parties of mutineers in the neighbourhood to the spot, Graham turned, and fairly taking to his heels, ran out of the compound in the direction he had previously determined to take. The moon gave a very feeble and uncertain light, not

sufficient to guide his steps, or to enable him to see distinctly what was before him. So it is not much to be wondered at, that, after emerging through the small opening in the wall made by the servants for their convenience in coming and going to and from the bazaar, and forgetting entirely the existence of a deep ditch that surrounded the cantonment on that side, which was crossed by a little wooden bridge, he fell headlong in. It was not very deep, but the ground was hard, and, with the impetus of the force he was running at, he might have injured himself severely had he not fallen on something softer than his mother earth. What it was he had fallen on he could not at the moment divine: speedily, however, he discovered that it was the body of a living man, for he found himself clasped tightly round the waist by a grasp which felt as if he who gave it was fully resolved not to release it while life lasted. He struggled to free himself, or to get out his revolver, but ineffectually, and, after a short but fierce contest of strength, Graham was fairly rolled over on his back, while his antagonist planted his knee upon his chest, and held his revolver's muzzle to his head.

The change in the relative position of the two wrestlers enabled Graham to see full into

the other's face; and then, and not till then, did he attribute his present position, and his antagonist's hostility, to the right cause; to wit—his dress.

'Hold, for God's sake! Harley,' he said, just as that energetic gentleman was about to pull the trigger of his revolver.

Harley, for it was he, at the sound of his voice started in a moment to his feet.

'It's your own fault, Graham,' said that gentleman, reseating himself in the position he held before Graham came in contact with him, at the bottom of the ditch. 'You should be more particular what dress you go about in. Who was to take you for an Englishman, with that cursed red coat on?'

'My good fellow, it has saved my life once to-night.'

'And put you within an ace of losing it, too: so the advantages are counterbalanced. But, tell me, where have you come from?—mean originally, not immediately, for I have a very good reminder in the feeling in my stomach that the last place you came from was the top of the ditch.'

'That's your story, is it?' said he, when Graham had finished a brief recital of his night's adventures, which are already known to the reader. 'Now let us hear yours.'

'My story is soon told. I went on a wild-goose chase after those people, fancied myself on their trail several times, but always to be disappointed, and was obliged to give it up and come back. When I got about a mile from cantonments, the mutiny broke out, as we saw and heard plainly enough. My gallant escort fired a volley at me and rode off; my horse was wounded, and I was obliged to leave him and come on foot; so I came along cautiously, and, after half-a-dozen of the narrowest escapes I ever read of, even in Captain Mayne Reid's books, I took refuge here, and have been devouring a crust of bread I had in my pocket, thinking what I should do next.'

'What do you propose to do?'

'Do? why, I take it, it doesn't much matter what we do. Has the Nawab gone?'

'I don't know; but I know that Dacres thought he was staunch, for he has given orders for all the ladies and children to be taken to his palace: indeed, it is the rendezvous.'

'Well, then, we had better try and get there too; but I'd like to see first if we can rescue or help any poor creature in this place first. Come along; get your revolver all right.'

'I'll keep my disguise; and if we get into a hobble, recollect I'm a Jack orderly to the General Sahib Gunga Singh, and you are my prisoner going to have your brains blown out. D'you understand?'

'Perfectly; now move on.'

They avoided the brigadier's house and garden, and took the next one to it on their way back to the cantonment. They met no one; indeed, the bazaar people seemed to have fled, and the sepoys to be all on parade. As they approached the road, however, they heard the sounds of horses' feet advancing at a quick trot, and at the same time a great blowing of horns and beating of drums, such as our irregular cavalry always use. There was evidently a large party going along the road. They ran down to the garden-wall, and reached it in time to see the new-comers pass, from a secure hiding-place under the trees.

The arrival was an important one; at least, to judge by the number, dress, and accompaniments of the escort. About a dozen horsemen, armed and gaudily dressed, trotted on in front, preceded by two torch-bearers and two mounted musicians, one of whom beat the drum, and the other kept blowing a trumpet; behind them came the chief of the party, also dressed very gaudily, and well

mounted, wearing a cuirass, or breast and arm piece of chain armour; on each side of his horse ran a torch-bearer, and it was by the aid of the light afforded by their flambeaux that Graham and his companion were enabled to see distinctly the dress, form, and features of the chief. Graham easily recognised him, and nudged Harley to draw his attention to him too. It was the same man, with the fair skin and blue eyes and European cast of countenance, they had seen occupying so conspicuous a position in the assembly of conspirators in the Sudder Ameen's house. The whole party, as I have said, were advancing at a quick trot, so there was but little time for observation. Behind the chief came another body of about fifty horsemen, as nicely but less gaudily dressed than the advance, and all well armed and well mounted.

As the last of the train passed them, Graham and Harley left their hiding-places and emerged on the open road.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It is now time for me to beat back and give a brief narrative of how the outbreak began.

Confidence and tranquillity had been completely restored in the cantonment long before the evening set in; and the first intimation that anyone received of the impending outbreak was the signal-gun being fired. The sepoys, though calmed down after their previous excitement, were raised into almost unanimous mutiny by a very simple device. I have already alluded to the prevalence of a rumour that a body of European troops was marching upon the station to coerce the sepoys into taking the obnoxious cartridges, and otherwise destroying the distinction of caste, &c. The story was now revived; and in corroboration of it, a man went through the lines of each regiment and detachment, showing to every native he met a paper which purported to be, and was indeed, an order to the native authorities in the surrounding villages to collect, and send in to the station,

supplies required for a force of two thousand European soldiers: these supplies, it was stated, were required the next day. This paper had the regular seal of the magistrate's office, and was duly signed by Mr. Harley's initials. This was quite sufficient: it passed from mouth to mouth, the report growing in importance every minute, till at length it assumed the most extravagant dimensions. The train was thus, as it were, laid, and the signal-guns set fire to it.

The programme was well observed; parties of sepoys were told off by twos and fours to watch the roads, and shoot down all the English, either men, women, or children, that crossed their beat in the attempt to escape. Many actually had the audacity to conceal themselves in the trees and shrubberies in the different gardens, with the same murderous intent; while parties of incendiaries had been told off to fire the houses in different parts of the cantonments simultaneously. All this was pretty accurately carried out. The only thing it failed in was, happily, the destruction of life. A special providence seemed to watch over and befriend the hapless Europeans, who at first sight appeared to have but very little chance of escape. Yet they did escape in numbers: either the shots fired at

them missed, or they took other roads than those watched by their would-be murderers; and in not a few instances the sepoys were withheld from firing from an aversion to shedding the blood of the unoffending hapless victims of the insurrection. But what tongue shall tell, what pen shall write, what pencil depict, what imagination conceive, the amount of human agony that the ominous booming of those signal-guns ushered in? The recording angel, and He alone whose eye is everywhere, and who can appreciate the woes of human sufferings, can tell. In an instant the tranquil cantonment seemed transformed into a pandemonium; the very air seemed filled with voices, all yelling out for murder and destruction. Women shrieked, and ran hither and thither purposeless, maddened with fear; others, more calm and composed, gathered their little ones about them, and resigned themselves to the will of their Heavenly Father. Husbands were distracted with no unmanly fear; their arms, strong at other times to wield the sword and strike the foe—their hearts, stout at other times to brave danger, and encounter death in the cause of duty—ceased to respond to the call the crisis made on them. In a few, a very few instances, the domestic servants aided the escape

of their mistresses and children, who, disguised in native dresses, sought safety in the out-houses. The brute creation caught the infection of excitement, and the frantic neighing of horses and barking of dogs, mingled with the shouting, yelling, shrieking, and crying from all sides, joined with constant firing from muskets and occasional reports of cannon, all together raised such a tumult and din as we may fancy shall herald in the final destruction of all mortal things, when the trump of the archangel has summoned the quick and dead to the last judgment.

Among the natives, every man's hand seemed turned against his neighbour: indeed, there is no doubt that it was owing in a great measure to the lust and opportunity for plunder, that so many Europeans escaped with their lives that night. Very shortly after the alarm-gun sounded, parties of sepoys were to be seen plundering the shops in the bazaar, dragging women out by the hair of their heads, throwing them down in the road, tossing their children on the top of them, and then gutting the houses. The better sort of dealers were naturally the first attacked. In vain did the Nubbee Buxes and Ely Buxes, whose emporiums of European goods (Europe goods, as they called them) made their shops

a valuable field for the speculating plunderer, implore the sepoys not to injure their own countrymen; in vain did they offer large sums of money to purchase immunity—there was no distinction made, and before the rebel brigadier could carry out his measures for restoring order, which, to do him justice, he did as soon as he possibly could, half the property in the bazaar, amounting to several lacs of rupees' worth of goods, had changed hands, and become the 'lawful' spoil of the patriotic sepoys. Nor was it only shops that were plundered. Stables and coach-houses were made to yield up their contents. Numbers of the officers' grooms refused to saddle their masters' horses, or get ready the carriages or buggies for the ladies or children; and they were obliged to harness the animals themselves as well as they could, with their revolvers ever ready at hand. Even those who succeeded in getting a horse to mount generally had to leave at least one animal in the stable, which, of course, became the property of the next visitor, generally a rebel sepoy: in many cases families refused to wait till their conveyances or horses were ready, and took to flight on foot.

The officers of the different branches of the service, each having the most complete

confidence in his men, betook themselves on the sound of the alarm-gun to their own lines. Thither went Colonel Wetherall and all the officers of the 75th, except Graham, who was engaged elsewhere; thither went Captain Hornby and his second in command. Mrs. Wetherall and Miss Trinchinopoly were singularly unfortunate in one respect. They had both been fully prepared for a mutiny any and every day and night for the last fortnight previously. Had it occurred at any moment during that period, it would have found them ready, that is to say, with their bundles of clothes made up ready to throw into the carriage, their jewels and their stock of money disposed of as I have before hinted. But on this particular day, so highly improbable did it appear that a second alarm would take place after the first groundless panic had subsided, that they had by mutual consent determined to desist for once for a short while from their watchful attitude. And so like a thunderbolt from Jove came the tremendous shock. They huddled each a few things into a buggy which had been hastily got ready, and followed Colonel Wetherall at a little distance to the parade-ground. The men were at first respectful, but disorderly. They crowded together in a mass

round the quarter-guard, all with their muskets in their hands, which they had first taken and then loaded, without orders, many of them in their uniform, others half in their uniform and half in undress, and others in their native attire. The light from the blazing of the thatch-covered houses in the lines, which speedily caught fire, lightened up their savage features with a glare which rendered the scene more terrible from its changing hues, now red, now bright and glowing, now obscured with smoke, now fitful and flickering, decreasing as the flames met with some obstacle in their course, or swelling as they revelled in the dry grass and bamboos.

The officers were not left very long in suspense or uncertainty as to the temper or intention of the men.

After refusing to obey the orders repeatedly given by the colonel, they turned towards a native officer, who now rode out of the lines mounted on one of the colonel's chargers, and dressed in full staff uniform, with cocked hat and feathers, and with a drawn sword in his hand. He galloped down to the front of the column, if column it can be called, and waving his sword above his head, shouted out, 'Deen, deen!' At the sound of this word, the signal for so many acts of treachery and murder in

India in 1857, the whole of the men present simultaneously raised their muskets to their shoulders, pointed them at the small knot of officers (some of whom were accompanied, or followed, by their wives and children) standing or sitting on horseback a little way in front, and fired. Of course the movement was observed by those against whom it was directed; they separated instantly, and fled in different directions as fast as their feet or their steeds could carry them.

A few, however, fell; and among them were Colonel Wetherall, and Dickenson, the adjutant: they were mortally wounded. Mrs. Wetherall and her companion heard nothing beyond the discharge of firearms, but drove instantly in the direction of the open country in front, where darkness at least might favour their escape. Hornby and his second in command were fortunate enough to be protected by a small band of faithful men among the gunners, who declared no harm should come to their favourite officers, and succeeded in bringing them safely out of danger.

Having got rid of their European superiors, the mutineers began to take measures for electing officers from among their own number. This was a work not easily accomplished. The post of commandant, and the

higher offices, indeed, there was no discussion about; they had been filled up beforehand, and no one dared dispute the claimants' right; but there were a vast number of junior appointments which depended on the will and pleasure of the new leaders; and regarding these the controversy waxed hot and lasted long. Deputations of native officers came down from the cavalry and artillery, and the delegates, along with the infantry commandants, retired to a short distance from the spot where the mass of mutineers was congregated, and sat down to deliberate, aided in their discussion by the light of a few torches which were planted in the ground in the vacant space in the centre.

As I shall not have occasion to notice particularly the subsequent adventures or achievements of this body of the mutineers, who shortly after marched for Delhi, where they were merged into the mass of the rebel army, there is no necessity to follow out in detail the proceedings at the conclave. Suffice it to say, that before morning they had succeeded in organising themselves into a brigade under command of the officers, part of whom had been previously nominated to the posts they now held, by order from the head-quarters of

the rebellion, Delhi, and the rest selected by votes.

The remainder of this narrative will be devoted to following the fortunes of the fugitives, and relating their adventures. Much of the information is derived from Mr. Dacres's journal, the outline of which he found time to keep somehow, noting down the principal events, and the most marked features of the exciting times they were passing through, and filling it up and completing it at his leisure afterwards. In that journal I find the following extract of a letter written at the time to his wife, and copied into the journal, as a record to be permanently retained, giving a bird's-eye view of their position and prospects. This is too important a passage to be added at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

'ISLAMABAD, JUNE.—I have no fear for our position as long as the Nawab retains authority over his men; but how long that will be is very doubtful. He is a man of no great firmness of character, well disposed towards us certainly; but if the current sets in strong against us, I am afraid he will prove but a poor barrier, and against him the full force of the tide will be first directed. If he can protect us consistently with his own safety, I believe he will.

'Among the officers and others I have to cooperate with, and to depend a good deal upon for advice and energy in carrying out my orders, there are not many that are worth very much. Brigadier Cartwright's death, much as I lament the terrible circumstances attending it, was a happy deliverance for us. Colonel Wetherall and young Dickenson were a sad loss, and a loss not to be replaced. I have much confidence in Stevens's clear head and calm judgment, too much interfered with, alas!

by the critical position of his wife and family, exposed to all the dangers the boldest man and most hardy veteran might well shrink from. Barncliffe in shrewdness and cunning is almost a match for the natives, but I doubt his physical courage. Graham is a fine fellow, worth his weight in gold at a time like this; cool and collected in danger, cautious and wary, and at the same time as brave as a lion. In the present crisis, the memory of the unhappy events, in many respects similar to those we have just passed and are passing through, which attended the death of his mother, frequently recur to him, and cast a deep shade of melancholy on his otherwise spirited character. Murray is a brave soldier, but too impetuous, and wanting in judgment; and of my own immediate subordinates, Harley and Burleigh, the former is an active energetic civil officer; but we want now more of the qualities that distinguish military men. As for Burleigh, I thought well of him, but his conduct the other night was calculated to give a very unfavourable impression of his character to one who knows so little of him as I do. The present crisis is one which must soon try a man and prove what he is made of. Thurston's is a character I am uncertain about. Once or twice, suspicions, very vague and

undefined, so much so that they could not bear examination, and invariably disappeared when I asked myself on what grounds they rested, have crossed my mind, that he is not what he seems. I feel that I may be doing him the greatest injustice in harbouring such an idea for a moment; still, whether an honest man or a dishonest one, he is indisputably an Englishman, and equally, indisputably, are his fortunes involved with ours; and yet—but I will not commit my suspicions to paper—*litera scripta manet.* The present is a time when a strong hand and a stout heart are worth much. I will rather congratulate myself on having an extra rifle in an Englishman's hand, than indulge uncharitable surmises. This much I write in case of future accidents.

'As soon as the mutiny had become an accomplished fact, and it became necessary for me to act, I left the ladies under Stevens's charge, and requesting the company of Mr. Thurston—for two are better than one—proceeded to the Nawab's palace. This was about half a mile from my own house. We rode down there, and met with no obstructions on the way. When there, we found the utmost confusion and excitement prevailing. All the city people were about in swarms, like ants in a nest that has been disturbed. The Nawab

met us in the gateway of his palace, as soon as he heard of our arrival; and we accompanied him to the top of the arched gateway, from whence we had a good view of the surrounding country, of the cantonment in our front, and the palace and city in the rear. A number of his men and retainers followed us, as natives always do, curious to overhear our conversation, and we with difficulty induced them to keep at a respectful distance.

'We made them, however, leave us at last; and they went and stood together on the top of the wall about twenty yards off, clustered together, all chattering and looking at the unwonted spectacle of a British cantonment in a blaze. So the Nawab and I were left alone. Thurston of course was with us, but he understood scarcely anything of what we said to one another.

'I let the Nawab know at once what I expected of him, viz., to fulfil his promises and give us all such an asylum and a refuge as his palace would afford. He assented immediately, and appeared really grieved at the untoward turn of affairs. That he had, however, even then misgivings as to his ability to carry out his good intentions in our favour, was evident enough. And had it not been for what Burleigh would term a fortunate acci-

dent, but what I call an interposition of Providence, there is no knowing how far his good intentions and resolutions might not have been thwarted to our injury, and, maybe, destruction, even in the outset of our difficulties and perils.

'I apprehended no immediate danger to my house or its inmates, and was anxious to complete all arrangements with the Nawab, and not to leave him till I had by argument dispossessed his mind of some unfavourable views and ideas that I saw but too plainly lurked there. I remained with him for some considerable time, till our attention was directed to a cortége, accompanied by torch-bearers with flaming torches, that we saw coming along the road in the direction of the Nawab's palace, from the cantonment. We watched its progress till it came sufficiently close for us to discern, thanks to the light afforded by the torches, pretty plainly the dress and form of the people who composed it.

First came a band of horsemen, fully armed, and dressed in rather a fantastic fashion, like some of our irregular cavalry in full dress, with brass helmets, blowing trumpets, and one was beating a drum: behind them, riding a fine and richly-caparisoned charger, with the torch-bearers on each side of him, came a

strange being, whether European or native I could hardly have told, had it not been for his dress and aspect, that were unmistakably Oriental. His features were rather Jewish or Affghan than Indian, though not entirely of either character: his hair—at least the hair on his face and beard, for that on his head was of course concealed by his turban—was light-coloured, of a sandy hue. Had he been a European and in disguise, to dye it black would have been the first step towards concealing his real race and origin; what or who he was I could not make out: he was followed by a band of horsemen all well mounted and armed, and as fantastically dressed as those who had preceded him. The cortége came up to the gate, and there halted; so I had time to scan their features and appearance pretty closely before any colloquy took place. This began by the Unknown calling out to the gate-keepers inside to open the gate and admit him. They demurred, when he called out in a loud and authoritative voice that his business was with the Nawab, and that he wanted to see him immediately. Upon this, the Nawab, acting under the influence of a suggestive nudge from me, leant over the rampart and called out—

'"I am Nawab Zainat-ul-Abadin; what is your business?"

'"May health and prosperity attend the noble Nawab Zainat-ul-Abadin. May he flourish like the spreading peepul tree, and extend the grateful protection of his branches over all who take shelter under them. Is his highness the Nawab alone?" replied the stranger.

'"None but friends are with him," was the Nawab's reply.

'"I," said the other, "am Sheikh Sulim Sultan Shah, bearing a firman from the lord of Islam, the light of the world, the emperor of Hindustan."

'"The Nawab of Islamabad knows of no emperor of Hindustan; he is a faithful ally and servant of the British government," said my companion.

'"Has not the Nawab learnt by message from Heaven, and by the information of his own intelligence and foresight and acquaintance with what is passing around him, that by the decree of the Most High, the rule of the British government has ceased? No one in all Hindustan, either great or small, any longer acknowledges the authority of any ruler but the illustrious sovereign of Hindustan, now

seated on the throne of his ancestors, on whom be peace, and of his viceroys and lieutenants."

'"The Nawab of Islamabad has only one answer for traitors," he replied, with more tact and resolution than I gave him credit for.

'Just at this moment, and a most opportune moment it was, though I am persuaded it was not done designedly, a matchlock belonging to one of the Nawab's retainers, who were standing, as I have said before, in a knot a little way from us, and all leaning forward and looking over the battlements, went off. We were considerably startled at so unexpected a demonstration, and so practical an illustration of the words that had the moment before left the Nawab's lips; and there was a good deal of smoke where we were, and great confusion among the crowd below. The matchlock was loaded, and some one had been hit, at least so it appeared at first, though it turned out afterwards, as we soon learnt, that a horse, not a man, was the victim. The animal bestridden by one of the attendants of the magniloquent stranger was down, and his rider under him. The latter after a short struggle freed himself, and stood upon his legs—the horse was too badly wounded to rise.

'A shot delivered under such circumstances

might fairly be supposed to be only a forerunner of others to come; and so the leader of the party seemed to think, for he speedily directed one of the other attendants to pick up the dismounted trooper behind him, and then gave the word for the whole party to move off. He did not go, however, without a threat. Regardless of the probable result of other shots aimed at his own person, he remained seated on horseback, looking up towards us, till the whole of his attendants had ridden for a short distance, and then he thus delivered himself:—

'"The message of this humble servant of God, and the humblest of the slaves of the illustrious emperor of Delhi, Sheikh Sulim Sultan Shah, by his majesty's royal firman soobahdar of the province of Islamabad, to the rebel Nawab Zainat-ul-Abadin, is that the rebel's house shall be razed to the ground, after his vile carcase has been hung up over the gateway: and let all true servants of the Prophet (with whom be the blessing of the Most High!) and all Hindoos who have regard to the religion of their forefathers, all Moslem and Hindoos who do not want to drink swine's blood, and eat swine's flesh, and the flesh of the cow sacred to the gods, get from under the tottering wall, lest it fall upon them. The curse

of Heaven is upon those who desert their religion and sacrifice their caste."

'"Fire at him," cried the Nawab, angrily, to his men: but this time no matchlock was raised, and, all unharmed, the stranger, after a gesture of hatred and defiance, turned and rode away. For a time no one moved: there was the deepest silence; we watched him riding off as if we were criminals, and he an officer who had just uttered the sentence of the law upon us. I had my revolver, and longed to try my skill upon the villain: but I felt it would be useless. I was a very bad shot—the chances were fifty to one that I missed him, and somehow I felt that I should want my weapon and its six balls for my self-defence that night. The silence of the Nawab's men and their refusal to fire boded no good for us. I watched the stranger till he joined his attendants, and then, seeing that they took the road in the direction of my house, I felt apprehensive of an attack; and hastily but warmly congratulating the Nawab on the resolute, and indeed noble manner, in which he had played his part, I asked Thurston, who had been a silent spectator of all that had occurred, and who of course had understood little or nothing of the colloquy, to accompany me, and descended, with as much speed as was

compatible with dignity, to the spot where we had left our horses. We saw nothing of our visitors on the way back, and on reaching the house I was considerably relieved to find that no hostile demonstration had been made by them. In what direction they had gone I did not know: there were several roads branching off from the main one between the palace and my house, any one of which they might have taken. They might have gone towards the city, or by a circuitous route returned to cantonments.

'The description Stevens and Graham had given me of the peculiar European features and stamp of countenance of one of the conspirators in the Sudder Ameen's house, recurred to my recollection as I rode home, and the identity of the conspirator with the principal character in the scene I had just witnessed seemed established.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE extract given in the last chapter explains fully Dacres's views regarding the position he and his friends stood towards the Nawab, as well as his own ideas regarding the critical nature of their situation. The scene he witnessed on his return is not easily described. He found the ladies in a state of overwhelming distress, and grief most heart-breaking to behold. It seems, Burleigh had returned during his absence, and brought with him a most dismal account, enough to draw tears of blood from any mother's heart. He had, in fact, done nothing. Whether he was paralysed with fear himself and incapable of action, or whether he had really been unsuccessful in his efforts to obtain tidings, they could not at the moment tell, but his account of himself was that he had ridden through a great part of the cantonments, that every house had been sacked and fired, and every Englishman, every woman and child, ruthlessly massacred. The violence of the first shock of these terrible

tidings which the two mothers had to bear, had passed away before Dacres's arrival, which was only in time to bring him face to face with a scene of distress and despairing agony altogether indescribable. Tears had come to their relief, but nothing seemed to assuage, no reasoning or sympathy seemed to allay, the bitter pangs of self-reproach and remorse which they seemed to take a morbid delight in inflicting on themselves, for what then appeared to them to be their heartless desertion of their little ones. The reader therefore may imagine somewhat of their feelings when a horseman was heard galloping up to the door, and the next instant a native trooper of irregular cavalry rushed into the room with two blooming children in his arms. The poor little things were too much frightened to cry; they looked bewildered and amazed and awed into silence, but their fair white innocent faces, and clear complexions and child-like expression of helpless dependency, contrasted very strangely with the wild excited features, dark skin and jet-black beard of the trooper who carried them. Nature guided him, and he had no difficulty in discovering at one glance who was the mother of each child. With a grin of savage delight and a triumphant air, such as no acting on the

stage could imitate, he placed in each mother's arms her own little one, and then retired towards the door. Glad to leave a scene that was now become absolutely too painful to witness, Dacres followed him, and endeavoured to gain all the information he possibly could, promising him at the same time the most ample reward for his invaluable services. From what he said, Dacres gathered every hope of the safety of the Stevenses' other child, and returning to the sorrow-stricken group inside, tried to instil into their minds a gleam of the hope that had now lighted up his own.

As Dacres returned into the room, Stevens passed him hurriedly.

'Where are you going?' he cried, attempting to stop him.

'Let me go,' he said half angrily and most determinately. 'Nothing shall stop me *now*: look after my wife, Dacres, like a good fellow, and my one child. God grant I may find the other!' With these words, spoken in a tone that expressed how his manly heart was wrung with agony, he rushed out into the darkness, and ran at his utmost speed in the direction of the burning cantonment.

Under circumstances of painful excitement, time passes in such a way that we can take no

account of it. Dacres had a hundred different things to engage his attention: at one moment he was endeavouring to instil confidence into the hearts of the fear-stricken ladies, to cheer them with hopes of the future; at another he was holding counsel with Thurston, or seeking intelligence from spies or fugitives, or listening to a report brought by some servant or retainer half dead with fear, or trying to issue brief and practical directions for the removal of everything that was moveable from his house and office to the palace. He felt that if he could have divided himself into half-a-dozen different individuals, instead of being one, he would have pursued and carried out his half-dozen necessary yet diverse duties simultaneously. How much time had elapsed he knew not, but probably it must have been half an hour or an hour, when another horse was heard galloping up to the door: was he a messenger of evil or of good? The next instant Murray's voice was heard, as usual loud and stentorious, and the next, oh! blessed sounds to a mother's ears! the voice —— of her little child, almost given up for lost.

It was little Georgy. Murray had brought him safe; and now followed embraces between wife and husband, mother and child, congratulations, words of thankfulness hastily yet

heartily spoken. Everyone asked questions, no one paused for answers. As for Murray, what with his joy at seeing his wife and child safe together again, and restoring little Georgy to his mother's arms, and his late adventures and rapid ride in the sultry night, he was completely exhausted. It was some little time before he could speak composedly.

'News?' said he—'news good and bad—bad enough—God knows in one way—yet we have much to be thankful for—we were just in time—only just in time.'

'And my husband, have you seen him?' was one of the many interruptions he met with almost before he had begun to speak.

'Yes, yes, he's all right; I met him about half a mile from this, on foot—going up to cantonments—to look for Georgy—good thing I met him—by Jove! never felt such heat—showed him Georgy—sitting like a little man in front of me on the saddle—told him to make haste back—I'd ride on and take him to his mother all right; he'll be here directly.'

'Have you come back alone?' said Amy with a trembling voice.

'Alone, yes——'

'Graham? where is Graham?' said her sister.

'Graham—oh, he'll turn up. I never saw a fellow behave so splendidly: you have to thank him for finding Georgy; indeed you have: it wasn't me—'twas Graham. By Jove, if it hadn't been for him, I should have come away and forgotten all about him—the finest fellow I ever saw, so cool, and brave—as a lion.'

'But where is he?' asked Dacres, feeling really anxious for his young friend's safety.

'That's more than I can tell you, where he is; but he'll be here before long. I'll be bound he'll not come to harm; you see, his horse fell with him——'

'And you left him?' said Amy, in a tone in which sorrow was mingled with reproach.

'Left him—yes, because I wanted to bring away Georgy. I wanted him to take my horse and ride off himself; but he steadily refused, and a house with the flames roaring over one's head and the sepoys roaring all round is no place to stand and debate a subject. But he's all right: there's no real danger there to anyone with his wits about him.'

'And what has become of all the rest?'

'Heaven only knows. But I've no doubt they'll most of them find their way here before morning. The sepoys of the 75th fired on their officers, so I heard. Colonel Wetherall

is killed; but how many of the rest, or who escaped, I cannot tell. It is impossible that all should have been killed, and it is not likely all escaped. We must wait till morning to hear more.'

'So Graham behaved well, did he?' said Dacres, anxious to hear more of their adventures, and he saw how Amy's eyes brightened up at any allusion to his gallant conduct. 'Let us hear what you saw.'

'Well, now, I'll tell you all about it.—Hark! what is that?'

There were sounds of wheels and of voices.

'It is my husband!' cried Mrs. Stevens, rising and rushing to the door.

It was Stevens: but he was not alone. A buggy stopped at the door, and two ladies alighted.

They were Mrs. Wetherall and Miss Trinchinopoly. They came in, threw themselves on the first chairs they found, and burst into a fit of weeping.

Dacres understood it all.

'Be comforted, my dear Mrs. Wetherall,' he said, feeling it necessary to say something, but hardly knowing what to say; for nothing is more difficult than to offer consolation for a sorrow that is beyond consoling. 'We all sympathise deeply with your loss. Colonel

Wetherall fell as he had lived, a gallant and brave soldier. His time of trial is over; ours is to come. Let us try to behave as he would have shown us how to behave, had he been spared to set us an example.'

He then beckoned to the gentlemen who were in the room to withdraw, and led the way outside.

'We can do no good there,' he said, as they joined him. 'Let us leave these poor things to their own sorrows for a time. Meanwhile, we have much to think about and much to do ere morning. We must talk it over.'

'What do you propose doing?' asked Stevens.

'Why, I propose—the only plan, indeed, which seems the least feasible—for us all to move to-night, or very early in the morning, into the Nawab's palace. It is a tolerably strong place as a defensive position; and as long as he is faithful and can trust his men to be so, we shall be safe,—at least, safer there than anywhere else.'

'Do you trust him?'

'I trust him, certainly, but not his men.'

He then related what had passed that night.

'It is a strange thing,' said Stevens; 'that fellow that you saw is evidently the same we saw in the Sudder Ameen's house. Who can

he be? What can he be? Is it possible that any European can be villain enough to league himself with these bloodthirsty brutes, and fight against his countrymen?'

'I can scarcely believe it,' said Dacres; 'but whatever he is, we may be quite sure of one thing—he is an enemy, a bitter deadly enemy too, and you may depend on it we shall see more of him yet.'

'Would it not be possible,' said Murray, 'for us to march with the ladies and children to the nearest station? The Nawab, if he is friendly, as you say, would lend us an elephant or two. We should have many dangers and hardships to encounter; but I question whether we should run as much risk in going as we shall in staying here.'

The question is, where are we to go to? Aurungabad is the place most easy of access; Mitterpore is the nearest military station, and they have some European soldiers there, I know,' said Dacres. 'I'll send off an express to-night, at any rate, to old General Codhead. But, at best, no succour can reach us for ever so long: we must determine on some immediate course of action. I am against leaving the place, as Murray proposes. We should, none of us, reach Aurungabad alive; we should have a large party of non-combatants

to protect, and a very small force to protect them with. Our abandoning the place would be the signal for the whole country to rise. Even the Nawab could not be kept straight a day after our departure.'

'But would that matter? The district could easily be recovered again with the first European brigade that comes up.'

'True. But, don't you see, we should be surrounded by enemies. The whole of the Nawab's retainers and dependents would be at us like a swarm of bees. Were we alone, with no ladies or children, I would vote at once for riding across country to the nearest garrison, and am quite certain we could do it easily; but, situated as we are, I am persuaded that it is utterly impracticable. On the other hand, I think we can altogether keep matters straight here, for some little time, at any rate. Mitterpore is about 200 miles, say ten forced marches: Aurungabad is 250, or more. I'll send to-night to Mitterpore a most urgent demand for aid, and I have no doubt the general there will despatch a party of European soldiers on camels, who might make this in seven or eight days—less, perhaps—say five. Then we must allow eight for the messenger to go; so that I think we may look for the effectual assistance in a fortnight, say, from the pre-

sent. Now, I think we can hold out for that time.'

'Not if the mutineers attack us.'

'No, certainly—our position then will be very precarious indeed: but I do not expect they will. All my information goes to show that they intend marching straight for Delhi. You see, they do not want to offend more men of influence and position, like the Nawab, than they can help. As long as we are with him, they think they have us at their mercy. But to attack us while under his protection, or to attack him for protecting us, would put him against them immediately. If they do attack us, with their guns, why it is all up with us: there is no help for it.'

The colloquy was here broken short by the arrival of some fresh fugitives from the cantonments. They turned out to be three young officers of the 75th, and the two partners of the European firm, Messrs. Cork and Screw, who had accidentally fallen in with them on the road. From them Dacres learnt what had occurred on the parade-ground, and received authentic reports of Colonel Wetherall's death: and heard also, with much satisfaction, that there was a large party of fugitives behind, escorted by a good number of sepoys and troopers of the irregular cavalry, who had

remained faithful, and had withdrawn from the rest of the mutineers. They had proffered their services, and when they found they were trusted, formed themselves into a regular escort, and swore to protect with their lives the small band of officers and families left in cantonments. The men had their arms, and the troopers their horses, and it was good news for all that they were coming, for they would form a powerful reinforcement to the weakened garrison: besides, the moral effect of having a faithful few around them would be great.

To set against this good news, they heard with the utmost sorrow that poor Graham had fallen. Neither of the speakers had seen him fall, nor come across his body; but they had derived their information from some of the sepoys who were among the faithful, and who declared they had seen his dead body on the parade-ground. He had probably gone there with the view of rendering some assistance, and there fallen in the execution of his duty. They had not long to wait for further particulars, for they soon after heard the sound of approaching men and horses. The ladies were at first very much alarmed, fearing that the mutineers were marching down upon the house; but were speedily reassured by being

told that the detachment coming were friends, and good friends too. They escorted several of the ladies, Mrs. Barncliffe among them: her husband was also there.

Dacres personally questioned the men who were said to have seen Graham's body; they were a sergeant and a sepoy of his company; they declared they had seen it lying on the road, not on the parade-ground, but in cantonments, on the road leading to Murray's house. Their description of his dress, however, did not quite tally with Dacres's recollection of it, and he could not help hoping that there was a mistake, though it was likely enough to be true.

The interior of the house was wholly given up to the ladies. Mr. Dacres and the rest had concerted their plans, and the whole of the officers present, with the exception of Murray and one or two of the younger hands, having taken this view of the case, and formed a decided opinion that the best policy was to repair to the Nawab's palace, and hold out there, he wrote a letter to the general commanding at Mitterpore. It was as follows, condensed as much as possible to allow of its being rolled up and sewn between the inner and outer leather of the sole of the messenger's shoe. He had selected as bearer

of this important letter, upon whose safe delivery the safety of all concerned so much depended, one of Murray's faithful troopers, who volunteered to make his way across country, passing himself off, of course, as a rebel, to Mitterpore, where, on delivering the letter, he was to receive five hundred rupees, and five hundred more from Dacres on his returning with an answer, or with a detachment of European soldiers, which was the sort of answer that was wanted.

'From the Commissioner of Islamabad to the Officer Commanding at Mitterpore.—Native troops all mutinied—attempted the lives of their officers; refugees, officers, and families, thirty or forty souls, in the greatest danger; protection afforded for the present by the Nawab. Send a party of European soldiers immediately, mounted on camels if possible. The bearer to receive five hundred rupees on safely delivering this; he will show the nearest road. Most emergent.

(Signed) 'J. DACRES,
'Commissioner of Islamabad.'

After seeing the messenger start, mounted on the best horse that could be selected from the batch brought in by the troopers, with

the letter securely concealed, Dacres sent another of the irregular cavalry troopers to the cantonments to bring intelligence of the mutineers' movements, and all that was going on in the now ruined station. He then went into his office to select the most important of the records there, to have them ready at hand in the event of a sudden move being necessary, and on his way through the house paid a visit to the drawing-room, where several of the ladies were, some sitting, some lying down, endeavouring to get a little rest. It was too dark for him to see who they were, as they had only a small wall-lamp burning low, but they saw him, for the moment he entered he was assailed from many quarters at once with —'What news? What news?'

'News?' Dacres replied: 'all is going on pretty well. We have fixed to remain here for the present, and when a move becomes desirable to go all of us into the palace; it is close by, not half a mile off. I have sent a messenger on the strongest and fleetest horse we could find to the nearest military station for aid, and we shall have a party of European soldiers here in a few days without fail. So keep your spirits up.'

'And the mutineers——'

'Are bound for Delhi, and will not molest

us, at least I believe not; but I shall have more information soon.'

'Have there been any lives lost?'

'Well, we hardly know as yet. I hardly believe that story about poor Graham.'

'What about him?' said a voice he recognised as Mrs. Stevens's.

'Why, they say he has been killed, and that his body was seen.'

Dacres was interrupted by a suppressed scream, and the sound as if some one had fallen.

He put up the lamp, and saw a group gathered round a lady in the corner. It was Amy Leslie; she had fainted. 'There is a secret revealed there, at any rate,' thought he, passing on, feeling he could be of no use. But scarcely had he reached the office, which was beyond the room where the dialogue just related took place, when he was called out again by a hasty summons.

'What is the matter?' he asked of Stevens, whom he met entering the house.

'It is the trooper you sent up to cantonments come back in hot haste. He says the mutineers have horsed the guns, and are already on the road to attack us. We must make a move, I fancy.'

'At once, if this be true. Is Murray here?'

'Outside there.'

The intelligence was exactly as Stevens had given it.

'There is no time to be lost. What do you say, Murray?'

'We must be off at once.'

'All right,' said Dacres. 'You are senior officer, you know; make your own arrangements. The ladies and children will have to travel slowly. Though it is but a short distance, we may be attacked before we get there. We had better march in fighting order. Put me down as a volunteer; we'll all obey orders.'

Dacres then returned into the office again, to complete his hasty arrangements for saving the most important of his papers. What an excellent recipe for getting rid of old office documents is a mutiny!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE road from Mr. Dacres's house to the palace passed through part of the city, but by making a détour and skirting the wall it was possible to avoid it. The latter route was determined upon, for the less they paraded their misfortunes and their weakness before the city-people the better. The great difficulty was to procure conveyances; but by dint of squeezing and making shift, they managed to get all the ladies and children carried somehow. In about half an hour the mournful procession was ready to start. There were eighteen European combatants. A party of six, with the majority of the faithful troopers and sepoys, were to go on ahead, among them Mr. Dacres; the rest under Murray brought up the rear. The moon had set, and the night, or morning, for it was nearer that, was pitch dark. However, the road was open, and there were no obstacles. Stevens had command of the advance party, as Mr. Dacres took on himself no military duty, and as he much wished to complete his

arrangements at home, and see as many things as were likely to be of use to him as possible started off under his own eyes, he remained behind till the whole cavalcade had set off, promising to ride on and overtake them before they reached the Nawab's palace, where it was desirable he should present himself among the first that came. His servants, who had hitherto behaved very tolerably for Hindustanees—that is to say, they had neither attempted as yet to cut his throat nor run away—had brought together a number of coolies. These he loaded with boxes of articles he thought likely to be most useful. Every stitch of clothing that could be got would be wanted; all his guns, ammunition, shot, &c.—all the medicines, all the preserved meat, soups, tea, coffee, liquor, and the other articles of consumption it is the custom to keep in store, were all packed up and started off. Mrs. Dacres, before she went home, had left two or three boxes of clothing of various kinds, partly her own and partly belonging to the children. Mr. Dacres had always been thinking of giving these things away, but had never done so. Every scrap was now carefully locked up and forwarded among the rest of the really necessary articles to be taken in the flight. The books and papers he deemed it necessary to se-

cure were packed in very small compass: there were a few documents from the office that it was advisable to save, and he took all the bibles and prayer-books he could find, a complete volume of Shakspeare, and one or two other standard works, in case any refugees ever had leisure or inclination to read, which at the time seemed most unlikely.

He was busily engaged in these duties, listening all the time to the sounds made by the retreating party wending their way along the road which led from the back right round to the front of his house, when he heard Stevens's voice quite distinctly amid the still night air, calling out 'Halt,' and the next instant he heard the sound of horses' feet galloping along the road, as it appeared, from the direction of cantonments. Apprehensive of some disaster, he hurried out, jumped on his horse, which was standing ready saddled at the door, and rode off as hard as he could. It was not without difficulty that he found his way to the front of the column, the road being much obstructed by the vehicles the ladies were in. As he reached it, and rode up to Stevens, who was standing sword in hand in the centre of the road, two horsemen approached at a rapid pace.

'Who comes there?' called out Stevens.

'Friend,' said a voice, that Dacres recognised in an instant with a thrill of joy; it was Graham's.

'That you, Graham?'

'Yes, all right; who is here?'

'All of us—going up to the palace; who is with you?'

'Harley.'

By this time they had come up close and reined in their steeds.

'Well, what news? we heard you were killed.'

'No, thank God, I am all right, and so is Harley, though he nearly killed me.'

'And Graham quite killed me. Fancy a man twelve stone falling head foremost from a height of six feet on the pit of your stomach, just after you had consumed the only meal you had had for twelve hours! What do you think of that, Dacres?'

'Bad enough, certainly.'

'And yet he wonders that I tried to shoot him for it.'

'But what news about the mutineers? We were told they were marching down to attack us, so we were all getting away as fast as we could.'

'All stuff and nonsense. Stay where you are: the mutineers are not coming. We have only

just left them. I hope they have left us—eh, Harley?'

'I am sure of it: I overheard ever so much of their discussion as to what they should do, and they have determined unanimously to march for Delhi at once.'

'It is really not true, then, that they are coming?'

'Certainly they were not when we left cantonments only a quarter of an hour ago.'

'What do you say, Stevens? shall we go on or wait, or go back on the strength of this intelligence?'

'Go on, I say, now we have once made a start. If we don't go now, we shall have to very shortly: we may as well go on.'

As no immediate danger was to be apprehended, they subsequently determined to return to the house, and start again after daybreak. The inconveniences attending so large and incongruous a party of both sexes and all ages getting to a place of residence entirely new to them, and making arrangements for a somewhat lengthy sojourn there, would have been multiplied a thousand fold by arriving in the dark; so that although Dacres had considerable misgivings about the mutineers' plans, and kept constantly on the look-out for intelligence, he determined it would be better

for the cavalcade to wait till day broke, and then start again. So they returned.

As he was busy in preparing for a more complete move by-and-by, Thurston came up to him.

'Are you at leisure, Dacres?'

'Why, I can't exactly say I am at leisure, but I don't expect to be more at leisure than I am now for a long time to come. I am quite at your service, if you have anything to say.'

'I have been thinking over affairs, and you will laugh at me perhaps, but it strikes me that we have been premature in our conclusions.'

'Premature! conclusions? what conclusions?' said the other, looking up from his work really astonished.

'Why, with regard to the intentions and acts of the mutineers. We, at least you, conclude they have mutinied.'

'I do, rather,' answered Dacres, laughing; 'it looks something like it: if you don't think so, take a ride up to cantonments and see for yourself.'

'The very thing I am going to do, but not without first saying what I have to say.'

'And what is that?'

'It is, that I do not see what right we have

to conclude that these men, sepoys, &c., have all determined to go against us. There are always blackguards in every large body of men, ready at any moment to work mischief. Though in the minority, their superior energy always gives them superior influence. The evil principle is active, the good passive—passive and unsuspecting. Well, because a few blackguards have done all this mischief, burnt down the station and wounded several of the officers, you conclude that all are equally guilty, and would bring them all under condemnation.'

'Condemnation!—very little of that; it is we who are suffering under condemnation—condemnation because we are Englishmen and Christians, and have behaved always with the utmost kindness and strictest honesty towards these villains who would murder us, our wives, and children in cold blood.'

'A few doubtless would; but why take for granted that all would?'

'It comes to the same thing. If there are a hundred men in the road, and two of the hundred take a fancy to beat your brains out with a cudgel, while the other ninety-eight don't help you, but look on quietly, or by shouts and gestures express their approbation of the deed, would you not hold all equally guilty?'

'If I called on the other ninety-eight and told them I expected them to assist me, and they then refused, I should consider them guilty: but to make the two cases parallel, you must suppose more. Suppose I had grievously wronged all these hundred men; suppose that for years I had had them in my power, and had been carrying on a system by which the greatest injury was inflicted on them—injury to their feelings, as well as to their persons, property, and families; and that then, when attacked by the two villains, I felt so conscious that I did not deserve any consideration from any of the mob, that I hesitated to appeal to their good feelings, or to solicit aid from them;—what then?'

'What then!' answered Dacres a little angrily. 'I see no parallel at all between the two cases. These villains could have prevented, if they had liked, the few (supposing your hypothesis is correct, and the worst part of the work has been done only by a few) from burning houses, plundering property, and massacring innocent people, their own benefactors.'

'Your view of the case is unnecessarily hard on these poor men——'

'Poor men!' called out Dacres indignantly; 'who the deuce do you call "poor men?" these infernal blackguards—treacherous, murderous,

mutinous, d——d cowardly cut-throats, who murder women and children, you call poor men!'

'Poor misguided men,' replied he, with most provoking calmness, 'but not altogether without excuse or palliation in their fault.'

'Excuse! palliation!' again repeated Dacres, waxing very wroth.

'Pray be calm, Mr. Dacres, and hear me out. I say, excuse and palliation. In the first place, they are heathens, and not Christians. In the next place, they are savages; like all savages, superstitious and suspicious to a degree, when aroused and excited bloodthirsty, anything you like; still, they are only doing what you and I would have done if we had been in their place. Had you and I, think you, been treated like slaves or domestic cattle, our religious prejudices outraged every day by our masters, abused when we presented ourselves even with the most abject tokens of servility, cursed, reviled even to our faces, our wives taken from us to gratify the licentious passions of conquerors—men, our superiors by accident, but hated as of another colour, creed, and race; if we ventured to complain, called factious, mutinous, disorderly, perhaps punished for insolence;—should we never have raised a finger in our own defence—nay, rather, should

we not have gloried in effecting by any means, by every means, the destruction of our oppressors?'

'I really do not understand you, Mr. Thurston, nor do I see how your remarks are any way applicable to present circumstances,' said Dacres. 'You surely do not mean to tell me that you believe the picture you have just drawn of a subject race, represents the natives of this country, and the condition they are placed in by us. This is not a time for much discussion, but believe me when I say that if these are your sentiments, they do you no honour, as they do indeed but little honour to your fellow-countrymen. Whence, I should like to know, have you learnt this lesson?'

'From books, and my own observation.'

'Then the first lied, and the second misled you.'

'All this is matter of mere opinion, Mr. Dacres: I did not expect you would agree with me in our ideas on this subject; but I can tell you these ideas are held by the majority, by far the greater majority, of your fellow-countrymen in England, and it is before them that this question must come ultimately to be decided. These are the ideas I intend to disseminate, when I return, as the result of a

practical study of the question. But all this is a digression. Will you lend me a horse?'

'A horse?'

'Yes, a horse—one of the equine species—also a saddle, also a bridle.'

'Certainly—but you will excuse my asking where you are going to ride to? I must warn you that the roads just now are very unsafe.'

'Thank you, I believe I know almost as much of the state of the country as you do, though I am but a wayfarer, and you a sojourner and a ruler in it. I take it, your experience and my theories, as you call them, are bounded pretty much by the same limit. I don't want to annoy you, you know, but people at home *will* say, you didn't know much about the country after all, seeing that you suddenly found out one day that you had been sleeping for the last ten years over a volcano, and had not the remotest idea what was under you. However, to return to the subject, if you will lend me a horse, I will go for a ride.'

'In what direction?'

'To the mutineers' camp.'

'Thurston, you are mad.'

'Very possibly; some philosophers say no man is sane. In their view, I am doubtless mad.'

'Are you aware of the risk you are running?'

'Perfectly. The stake I have in view is worth considerable risk—and, after all, there is no such very great risk that I shall run. A man on horseback can generally get away from a crowd on foot. I am a perfect adept at running away, I assure you, Dacres. Mount me well and put an enemy behind me, and trust me for bolting.'

'It is actually sinful to endanger your life for nothing. I cannot assist you in doing so, unless I know that you really have some very definite object in view.

Oh, yes, I have a very definite object in view. I am going to reason with the mutineers, and you will see I shall induce the majority to return with me.'

'I hope not; it is the last thing we want, to see them coming this way. But you cannot even speak to them or understand them!'

'Oh, yes, I can—quite enough to enable me to argue with them as man to man. And I have only further to say,' he continued, seeing that Dacres still hesitated, 'that if you won't lend me the horse, you will force me to go on foot, for to go I am determined.'

Dacres hardly knew what to make of the strange request, but seeing that Thurston was

really in earnest, and being moreover rather anxious to get rid of him at the moment, he gave the order for a horse to be saddled.

'Will you go alone, or shall I order an escort to accompany you?'

'Alone—I feel no fear for myself. The escort would be in my way.'

These words were the last that passed between them before Thurston set out on this strange expedition. They often recurred to Dacres afterwards, and gave him much deep thought and anxiety. 'The escort would be in my way'—What was he going to attempt?—and what secret ground of confidence had he, known only to himself, that he should set out on such a peculiar expedition, apparently for no object but the gratification of a whim, or the indulgence of a piece of eccentric obstinacy?

CHAPTER XXX.

SHORTLY after break of day, preparations for a second move were made. The same arrangements were carried out as before, but this time they had the satisfaction of knowing that their stock of necessaries had been much increased during the time that had elapsed between the first and second migration. Coolies had been constantly coming and going, and such carts and camels as could be got hold of. The party were provided with the actual necessaries of life for at least fourteen days, as Dacres calculated. By that time he hoped assistance would have arrived from Mitterpore.

All his business having been completed, the commissioner accompanied the party, this time riding at the head of the cavalcade, side by side with Stevens. As they emerged into the high road that led from cantonments after leaving the gate and circumventing the commissioner's house and garden, they saw two men galloping towards them at the utmost possible speed. They turned out to be

Thurston and a trooper of the irregular cavalry—no other than Asgar Ally.

'Well,' said Dacres, with the slightest possible expression of triumph in his voice, 'so your argument is ended? I congratulate you on getting away with your head on your shoulders. I hope you found your friends amenable to reason?'

'I am disappointed, I own,' he replied, 'but the fact is, the impression against every man with a white face is so strong that the mutineers could not but regard me with suspicion.'

'You have not persuaded them to accompany you?'

'Not exactly. If it had not been for that noble fellow,' pointing to Asgar Ally, 'I should have fallen a victim to that disrepute which, thanks to you and your system, every Englishman has now fallen into in this country.'

'What, did they fire at you?'

'Well, a little more than that. They were about to fire me altogether, I believe.'

'What, burn you alive?'

'It looked so—as well as I could divine their intentions.'

'You seem to take it marvellously coolly,' thought Dacres, impressed more and more with

the strange eccentric character of his friend. From the conversation that continued as they went along, he gathered that Thurston had ridden up, favoured by the darkness of the night, close to where the leading mutineers were sitting in conclave, unobserved and unchallenged. No sooner had he revealed himself than he was seized amid the exultant acclamations of the rebels, who thirsted for his blood, and literally revelled with delight at the anticipated pleasure of shedding it, after first putting their victim to every imaginable torture. He was rescued by Asgar Ally, who appeared, according to his account, to have had immense influence in the rebel senate. They tied up Thurston to a stake, intending to burn him alive after torture, as the last commemorative act before they left the place. Asgar Ally, however, had induced them to forego the savage pleasure, and persuaded them to make over their victim to him for safe keeping. They did so; he took his prisoner away under pretence of confining him, and when out of sight, having managed to secure two horses, mounted his prisoner on one, and himself on the other, and so rode off. Dacres closely cross-examined Asgar Ally, whose language was of course nearly unknown to Thurston, but in no single point did his nar-

rative of events differ from the Englishman's. He was therefore forced logically to place implicit faith in it. All the rest did so; but for himself, Dacres confessed to having an unconquerable, undefined kind of suspicion with regard to Thurston. As for Asgar Ally, he could not regard him but with feelings of the utmost repugnance. He did not trust him in the least. Repeatedly he tried to disabuse his mind of these misgivings, which his better nature ever prompted him to believe were most unworthy suspicions, but he could not succeed. In spite of himself, he suspected them both. Who was Thurston? what was his history? what was he doing here in India at this time? What could have induced him to venture alone into the rebels' camp? How was it Asgar Ally turned up providentially at the nick of time? Would any man, especially of Thurston's temperament, habits, and previous life, have spoken so coldly—nay, jocosely—of the terrible fate he professed to have had such a narrow escape from? Then again as to Asgar Ally, all he knew about him for certain was, that he was at one time admitted to the most confidential counsels of the rebels, even among the leading conspirators; and besides, he had possession of an important secret.

The statement, however, was clear, precise,

and to the point; he never contradicted himself on one of the numerous questions that he answered. If a true friend, he could be invaluable to the refugees; active and energetic, at the same time crafty and ingenious, with immense influence over his countrymen, there was scarcely a limit to his sphere of usefulness; at the same time, if he was playing false, he would prove a most dangerous enemy. Murray had the most unbounded confidence in him, but so he had in all who had not actually rebelled: his was a warm impulsive nature, prone to action, ready in danger, but wanting in cool deliberate judgment. Thus Dacres meditated, resolving to watch closely the two suspected characters, and meantime keep his doubts to himself.

One point of Asgar Ally's story was reassuring. He maintained that the mutineers had never entertained the slightest wish or idea of attacking them. They were perfectly content—more than content—intoxicated with delight at their present success, and their only anxiety was to reach Delhi by the shortest road, and lay the trophies of their victory at the foot of the Mogul throne. Even had they entertained any other ideas, it was quite out of the question, Asgar Ally assured them, their attempting further annoyance to the English

while they were under the protection of the Nawab. It was no part of the policy of the leaders in the rebellion to offend the influential members of the aristocracy of the country.

The Nawab gave the party a good reception. Well aware of the importance of outward ceremonials in the Asiatic mind, Dacres was a little anxious about the way he would receive them, lest the unfavourable circumstances they were labouring under should be taken by him as an excuse for doing away with the little details of ceremony that etiquette required him to show to a party of British officers and their families, accompanied by the highest civil functionary in the district. But no Chinese mandarin who had just passed his examination in the 'ceremonies' could have received them with more state and outward tokens of respect. This had its effect upon the multitude, who were watching the slightest indication of a change in the political horizon.

The men took their cue from the master, and Dacres felt that for the present, at all events, they were safe.

The palace and grounds allotted to the party of refugees consisted of a large double-storied building overlooking an extensive garden. The entrance was under a handsome gateway that admitted you into a quadrangular piece

of ground of considerable extent, laid out in garden-walks, interspersed everywhere with little aqueducts or canals for carrying water to the flower-beds. These beds were well stocked with shrubs, pomegranate and other fruit trees. The left side of the quadrangle was flanked by that portion of the palace allotted for their residence. Its construction was peculiar. You entered the building apparently on the ground floor: after crossing the inner apartments, which were numerous, lofty, and spacious, you came out on a verandah which overlooked a garden at a great depth below. The appearance of this range of rooms being on the ground floor was deceptive, as a glance over the balustrade fronting the verandah told you. There was another suite of rooms below answering to those above, only to reach them you had to descend a broad stone staircase in the interior of the building. On the opposite side of the quadrangle was the part of the palace occupied by the Nawab's seraglio, that is, by Leila and her handmaidens, for, unlike most Mahometan gentlemen of his age and country, he kept no concubines. The rooms allotted to the English residents were those generally used by the Nawab for his reception-rooms; he now gave them up entirely, on one condition only, that the ladies alone should reside in

the upper story, that is, the story level with the quadrangle, and the gentlemen should have the lower range: and it was expressly stipulated that while the ladies had the free use of the garden in the quadrangle to walk about in, the male portion of the party were not to present themselves there at all, save under exceptional circumstances and by special invitation.

The lower garden was surrounded by a fortified wall, with a gate at the other end giving egress to the open country. It was the same garden in which the Nawab had given the fête alluded to in the former part of this narrative.

The fugitives, for such the English residents at Islamabad had now become, reached this harbour of refuge in perfect safety, and set to work without loss of time to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow, and to dispose their property and stores in the most convenient and safe manner possible. Their faithful native followers took up their abode in the lower garden, where they pitched some tents and picketed their horses under the large trees with which it was pretty well filled. Stevens made a careful survey of the whole building, with a view of deciding on what were its strongest and what its weakest points

ot defence, and how the latter could be most advantageously improved with the slender means at their disposal. He was an excellent practical military engineer, and nothing was likely to escape his eye.

The rest of the party made themselves generally useful. As may readily be imagined, the ladies did more in half an hour than the gentlemen in twice that time towards reducing the chaos to order, and giving the place something more approaching to an air of comfort than it seemed at first capable of having. But it was chiefly owing to one genius among them, whose exertions both then and afterwards excited the highest admiration, that such satisfactory results were attained. Amy Leslie, except to those who knew her intimately, had been looked on generally as a characterless girl, without much originality or talent of any kind, and without much energy. But even her own sister and brother-in-law were perfectly astonished at the new development of her character, as it appeared to them, though doubtless it was only the latent qualities of her mind making themselves felt and seen. How often is it the case that powers of mind and intellect lie latent, their existence entirely unsuspected till suddenly called into action by some unforeseen emergency! It was astonish-

ing what influence this young girl obtained over others who were so much more experienced than herself. All through the trying time that now seemed only to be beginning, her untiring zeal and energy never flagged, her physical strength never gave way; her presence of mind, calm judgment, and quiet, ladylike deportment never deserted her. In the moment of the greatest danger, when their lives seemed to hang almost on a thread, one glance at her calm and heroic features, unmoved amid perils that caused the stoutest heart among them to beat with double speed, was like a blast of Roderick's horn, almost worth a thousand men. In taking care of the children, nursing the sick and wounded, providing for the wants of the little band of defenders who were engaged in arduous and dangerous duties that allowed them no leisure for looking after meals or refreshments, she was indefatigable. She braved peril as much as any, more than many of the gentlemen, yet never needlessly. They called her the Maid of Saragossa, and it was no unfitting name, save that she confined her sphere of action to duties more consonant with her sex, and more adapted to her gentle nature.

Many have been the heroines of history, but the concurrent testimony of all the members

of that little band had it on record in their hearts, that never did the nobility of womanhood shine forth more brightly than in Amy Leslie.

During the day they had several alarms, now that the mutineers were in full march against them, now that the city had risen, now that the Nawab had turned and given orders for their destruction. It was curious to watch how different characters were affected by these alarming rumours and the general state of their circumstances. Amy was, as I have said, calm and self-possessed always. Miss Trinchinopoly had made up her mind that she was destined to end her days in the seclusion of a Mogul's seraglio, where she pictured to her imagination her lovely frame and maiden charms enveloped in such nondescript garments as Eastern beauties are generally drawn in, reclining upon velvet cushions and smoking a long pipe. Mrs. Wetherall entirely succumbed to her grief: nothing served to rouse her. Mrs. Stevens was wrapt up in her children, and with sound practical common sense busied herself energetically in making the best of the means she had, to insure their comfort, with regard to rest and food. She got their meals prepared, badly, but nevertheless in some sort of fashion, by one of the few Mahometan ser-

vants that had accompanied them, fed the little ones herself, and then put them to sleep side by side in a bed made upon the ground, and sat by them, while they slept, to drive off the flies. Amy was about, here, there, and everywhere, arranging this room and that, storing away the commissariat, apportioning the little stock of children's and ladies' clothing that had been sent from Dacres's house among all applicants, superintending the preparation of the evening meal, and having a cheerful word for everyone.

They had arranged to dine just before it got dark, when the labours of the day would be pretty well over; and as it was an object to them to economise candle-light as much as possible, they fixed an hour for dinner which would enable them to have it over before it became necessary to indent on their limited supply of means for artificially lighting the room.

Dinner was hardly over when a message was brought from the Nawab to the effect that he wished to see Dacres in private, and would be happy either to wait upon him there, or would receive him in his own apartments. There being no facilities for receiving him in private without putting the rest of the party to inconvenience, the commissioner returned

answer that he would come over to the Nawab's apartments as soon as dinner was concluded.

The Nawab's manner was as cordial and polite as usual, nor were any of the ceremonies or customs required by the punctiliousness of Oriental etiquette in the reception of the English functionary omitted. As soon as the attendants had withdrawn to a distance which left the Nawab and his visitor practically alone, the former entered on the subject uppermost in his mind in this fashion :—

'Between friends there should be no concealment. I hope the officers who have accepted the hospitality of my roof have found themselves comfortable.'

'Very much so; we are all grateful to your highness for the refuge afforded us, and I am quite sure the British government will know how to reward its allies and those who prove its friends under adversity. I trust no intelligence of an unfavourable nature has reached your highness from the mutineers' camp?'

'None whatever. It appears, as far as my spies can be depended on, that they intend proceeding to Delhi.'

'As soon as they have gone, we shall be able to return—not exactly to return to our houses, for they are nearly all destroyed; but we shall be able to leave your highness's mansion,

which we shall do with regret, and take up our abode in the Civil station, which has not been destroyed.'

The Nawab shook his head. 'No, that will be impossible. I can protect you here, but outside you will be in peril of your life. Till the storm is blown over, or till you receive aid, you must remain where you are. If you go out, your blood will be on your own head.'

'We shall see; I will do nothing hastily,' replied Dacres.

'I trust your accommodation is sufficiently large?'

'Ample for people circumstanced as we are.'

'Yet the request I made about your English officers restricting themselves to the garden and their suite of rooms has not been observed.'

'How so?' asked Dacres, perceiving from the Nawab's manner that he was about to enter on the subject which had occasioned the necessity of the present interview.

'My eunuch informed me, this evening, that a European officer was seen very near my private garden, which, you are aware, is contrary to the agreement between us, and militates against all regulations of propriety and good breeding.'

'Certainly it does,' replied Dacres. 'But

is your highness sure your eyes have not deceived you?'

'Nay, I saw him not myself; but my attendants reported it to me—they saw him.'

'And did not seize him?'

'To have done so would have been to open the door of contention between us. Nay, he would probably have used violence—you English are always violent. My servants would have been compelled to do the same; blood would have been shed—and, when once it has been shed, who shall staunch it?'

Language of this kind from the Nawab, Dacres was utterly unused to; he was becoming more and more excited, spoke hastily and in a flurried manner, his eyes lighting up with passion or emotion of some kind. Dacres was uncertain how to act or what to say. The story seemed most improbable. Did the Nawab himself believe it, or was it a mere fabrication—a foundation on which to build other things—an excuse, in short, for changing his conduct and behaviour? Had the thing really occurred, no one would have been more desirous of discovering the perpetrator of this outrage against Eastern etiquette and the rites of hospitality, in their position an act of suicidal folly, than Dacres himself. On the other hand, if it was an excuse for unfriendly

behaviour, and the Nawab's words intended to convey a threat, he was determined to receive it as every English officer would receive it, in an undaunted and fearless manner. As long as the Nawab's friendship was to be retained it was worth retaining, at the cost of almost any exercise of diplomacy; but if he was about to range himself on the side of the enemy, there was nothing for it—the fate of the few English in his hands was sealed, and all that remained for them was to brave the worst, as men and women with English blood in their veins always do. Dacres had no time to pause before he replied, though reflections like these passed rapidly through his mind.

'Your highness,' he said, with the utmost calmness he could assume, 'must, I am convinced, have been misled. You began this conference by remarking that between friends there should be no concealment. I shall adopt that maxim as my guide in addressing you on this painful subject. In the first place, I am in my own mind perfectly persuaded that no English officer, or Englishman of any grade or station from among our party, has been trespassing in the way your highness alludes to. At the same time, I shall make the most diligent and searching enquiry if such a thing could, by any possible mistake, have taken

place. On the other hand, I am sure, if your highness reflects a little, your highness's natural intelligence and keenness of mental vision will lead you to see that there was no surer method that could be employed by our and your highness's enemies to place our character in an unfavourable light before you; in other words, to induce you to regard us with other feelings than those you have professed, and than those you have shown, by so kindly receiving us into your house. I am persuaded it will be found there has been some trickery in this, just as there was in that affair in the tomb. I have to ask your highness to be patient, and to assist me in investigating this matter.'

The Nawab remained perfectly silent all the time Dacres was speaking, regarding him intently. As he concluded, a smile of satisfaction played upon his lips.

'You have spoken the words of wisdom,' he said; 'let us be silent and watchful. Yet, if there be a trick here, then there must be many in my own household concerned in deceiving me.' 'In my own household,' he repeated, saying the words very slowly to himself, and apparently meditating deeply on them. Then he added, aloud, 'These are strange times, and Alla is manifesting the wonders of his creation:

last night a child was born in my household with light hair, blue eyes, and a set of teeth—and to-morrow the company's troops, having proved faithless to their salt, march to Delhi to fight against their rulers.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

OVERCOME by fatigue, anxiety, and the emotions given rise to by the events of the past twenty-four hours, the whole party gladly retired to rest, after first meeting together for what might be simply called family, rather than public, prayer. Misfortune had united them together closely in one common bond of unity; though many of them had been previously little better than mere acquaintances, they now felt like one large family. After the ladies had retired to rest, the gentlemen settled among themselves the course of action they were to pursue in the event of a sudden alarm. The upper room, where the ladies and children slept, was furnished fortunately with strong massive doors, which were all securely barred and bolted; and the gentlemen resolved to take the precaution of keeping watch in turns, each watch lasting for an hour. They drew lots for turns, and it fell to Graham to keep the first; Dacres came fifth or sixth; Stevens, immediately before him. And so,

after exhorting Graham to keep on the alert, they all spread their beds, some on the floor, some on the table, and were soon asleep.

I must not forget to mention that, to Mrs. Stevens's great relief, her faithful domestic Jooma had arrived about dusk, having, as she said, been all day trying to collect a little property belonging to her mistress and the children, which she brought with her, and having had innumerable obstacles to encounter, and many hairbreadth escapes of being seized and losing her precious burden. The woman was of the greatest possible assistance to her wearied and anxious mistress.

Dacres was awakened out of a very sound sleep by Stevens, who had to shake him once or twice before he could recall him to consciousness. What a contrast there was between the sleeping and the waking! He was far off in the land of dreams, away from anxiety, sorrow, and danger, with his wife and little ones in his own dear country. Returning consciousness brought back with it the horrible realities of the present, and the vivid recollection of the past few eventful hours.

'Is it my watch so soon?' he said, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes.—'What is that? Hark!'

The second expression had reference to the

report of distant cannon. It was for this Stevens had called him. He rose, and the two went outside together.

'I counted three reports before I went in to call you; there have been two since,' said he: 'let us count—there is another—that is six.'

'They are firing a salute, the villains—a royal salute, I dare say, before marching off, I hope.'

They counted—there were twenty-one guns, and all was silent again.

'Now they are off—what say you, Stevens, will they come here or go to Delhi?'

'To Delhi—stop—listen.'

They listened: through the deep and solemn stillness of the midnight air, there came floating on the breeze that but just stirred the leaves of the trees before them, the sounds of military music — then the noise of voices shouting out a wild hurrah—then a pause, and then, after a bright flash had illumined the horizon for a few seconds, came a sound as of distant subterranean thunder. The earth shook under their feet even at that distance. By-and-by the music began again, and continued growing fainter and fainter till it died away in the silence of the night.

'They are gone, thank God,' said Stevens.

'Amen to that,' replied Dacres; 'gone, and

ill luck go with 'em! Here's one of our difficulties removed, and a very serious one. Now you go and lie down, Stevens. I'll keep the rest of your watch; I could not go to sleep again if I tried.'

'Nor I—I would rather not attempt it.'

'Let us keep the watch together, then. I do hope, now that these fellows are really gone, that we shall be able to induce the Nawab to remain staunch, and that his influence will be sufficient to keep his men straight till aid can reach us from Mitterpore. Though I have not told you of it, an event has occurred which may be attended with awkward results. When I came back from my visit to the Nawab, I could not find you, and we were all so weary that I determined to put off any discussion about it till to-morrow.'

He then communicated to Stevens, as the two paced up and down the balcony outside the room, which was raised a few feet only from the garden-walls, what had passed between himself and the Nawab.

'You were right enough in your suggestion, no doubt,' replied Stevens, when the other had ceased speaking; 'but shall we get the Nawab to believe it—or shall we ever get to the bottom of the affair?'

'We'll try. There is not the smallest doubt

that there is some underhand agency at work doing us mischief, and I will never cease till I have unearthed it all. I frequently wonder who that man can be that has come across our path and flitted away again once or twice. You saw him in the Sudder Ameen's house. Graham and Harley evidently saw the same man in the cantonments last night—was it last night?—so it was—it seems more like last month. Then I saw him when he came up to the gateway and tried to induce the Nawab to go against us; and now this European, or ghost, or devil, turns up. Do you know,' he added abruptly, after a short pause, turning round upon his companion in their walk, 'I must tell you—I can't help it—I don't like this fellow Thurston. What does he want here—who the deuce is he?'

Stevens laughed. 'You don't mean that you suspect him of having anything to do with all these appearances, do you? Why, you might as well suspect Graham or me. Ten to one, it was the brigadier's ghost the Nawab saw.'

'Don't joke about ghosts, Stevens; we may be all ghosts ere long. Certainly, the old brigadier did as much damage as he could while he was alive—it is hard if he won't be content without working out our ruin now.

But, seriously, answer me if you can—who is Thurston?'

'Is he not an M.P.?' said Stevens, laughing heartily: 'you find his name in the list o members, don't you?'

'I find a name—but how do I know he is a good man and true?'

'But, Dacres, you are talking nonsense; let us think of the matter more seriously, for it is a serious matter. If the Nawab gets his countenance turned against us, as the native phrase is, it will be the end of us all. His men are only waiting the signal to fly like bloodhounds at our throats. Depend on it, we shall be right to avail ourselves of the universal maxim, "When anything goes wrong, ask who is she?"'

'In this case, then, she must be the Nawab's wife. You know he is unlike most Mahometan gentlemen. He has only one wife, a Greek or a Turkish lady, I believe; at any rate, a very superior person to the Indian ladies, the occupants of most harems; and she exercises, I know, an immense deal of influence over him.'

'I don't believe any man, much less a European, could have got into his private garden, or, what it is in reality (for of course etiquette prevented him from mentioning his

wife's name in my ears), in his lady's garden, without her consent and connivance.'

'Could not the eunuchs have given him admission, or wouldn't they, if they had a private end to answer?'

'They might, but I don't think it likely. But if we have to play at diplomacy with a woman, who is moving the machine while all the time we can't even see her, or see what she is like, it will go very hard with us. We shall never be her match in plotting and planning.'

'Cannot we use the same tools? If the enemy mine, suppose we countermine; if they plot, let us plot too. At any rate, we can meet them on even ground here.'

'How so?'

'Why, can we not use female intrigues as well as the Nawab or his unseen friends? I'll back my sister Amy to see as far as any woman—or my poor wife, as to that matter, only her anxiety about her children has quite unnerved her. Let us try to-morrow—or to-day, for it is just about dawn—to put Amy up to looking where our eyes cannot see, and find out what is going on behind the screen.'

'An excellent idea, Stevens. I'll see the Nawab, and try and persuade him to let Amy go and pay a visit to his wife. I've a great

curiosity to know what she is like. These fellows are beginning to awake. I'll ride up to the cantonment the first thing, and see if the coast is really clear, and pick up what news I can; and when I come back, I'll see the Nawab and try to get the entrée into his seraglio.'

'All right—but what are you going to do about your office, and Harley's?'

'Oh, we will go and try to carry on just as usual at court: we shall take our revolvers of course, and have our horses saddled; but it will never do to give up our regular office-work without an attempt to carry it on; it will look like abandoning the country to the rebels.'

'Well, take care of yourself, and God bless you.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

NEVER had Leila's attendants known their young mistress give them so much trouble as she did this day. She was peevish and fretful the whole morning, more than usually particular about her toilette, trying one little ornament or knick-knack after the other, and throwing them away again with an air of a young coquette dressing for her first ball. Even her favourite domestic who stood in the relation of lady's maid to her mistress, and who was treated rather as a confidante and companion than an inferior, was in her bad books to-day, and received almost as many rebukes and rebuffs as her less-honoured companions. At last, after a lengthened ordeal of their patience, they were permitted to depart, and leave the imperious beauty to herself, to recover, as they maliciously said to one another, her temper and her good looks, before the daily visit of her lord. When the husband, however, made his appearance, he found his pretty wife still pouting, and a frown upon her brow.

'What, Leila! still anxious and fearful? The worst is over: the mutineers have gone, and there is nothing that need disturb you in your quiet nest.'

'I am not anxious,' Leila replied, 'nor fearful.' 'Sulky, then,' thought her husband, but he did not dare say it, for, like many men with pretty wives in other lands than the East, he was very much afraid of her.

'What, then?' he said, sitting down at her feet as she reclined against the cushion, leaning her head upon her hand. A robe of the finest fabric enveloped her beautiful figure, falling from the back of the head and shoulders to the prettily-formed feet, clad in embroidered slippers that peeped out from under its slender covering. He took the hand that was disengaged, playfully, and was about to press it to his lips. She withdrew it.

'Come, Leila, this is nonsense,' he said, putting his arm round her waist, and kissing her lips in spite of her struggles to resist. She could no longer keep up the fiction; she smiled, and turned full upon him those large black lustrous eyes that filled—more than filled—overflowed—with love.

'How is it your highness wastes his precious hours with a poor slave?' she said with considerable bitterness, the old dark cloud

returning to her features, 'and leaves those kaffir houris, whom you call your friends, all to themselves?'

The Nawab answered with a bitter laugh.

'Ha, Leila! so this is the cause of the clouds over the sunshine of your beauty to-day—the kaffirs. Ah, truly, kaffirs—yes, but Alla's creatures nevertheless—and fugitives I have sworn to protect.'

'Nay, my lord, Heaven forbid you should not protect the distressed. I only asked you how it was you wasted your time with a poor slave, instead of drinking in wisdom from the pretty lips of the fair daughters of Satan.'

'I would rather kiss the dew on my Leila's lip than drink in wisdom from anyone's, even Suleiman's.'

'Yes, you think little of Suleiman's lessons, I know, otherwise you would not have forgotten his precept:—"The wise man who values Alla's gifts will cherish the maiden he loves."'

'No man can love more than I love you, Leila, and that you know,' replied the Nawab, speaking more seriously than he had before. 'You are unwise and unjust to be angry at what I said last night. I said, these English ladies were not brought up like our own ladies—like you, Leila, though you are more

like them than any other of my country-women.'

Leila pouted disdainfully and pursed up her lips at this equivocal compliment.

'They are educated, and able to talk with their husbands and brothers on affairs of state, and to aid them too in their duties. I said they are wise, and as beautiful as they are wise, graceful, and elegant, and spotless in chastity—and pure.'

'Go on, go on, pray do not be afraid of exhausting your stock of praises too soon. I shall never get tired of hearing them.'

'What will you have, Leila? what shall I do, or what shall I not do, to please you? These people are in great danger; I must be with them, I must consult with them, I must see them, I must talk to them, and their ladies do as much to manage their affairs as the men. I cannot associate with one and not the other.'

'Pray do not put yourself to inconvenience on my account,' she said, turning away her face; 'only when the kaffirs are sent to hell, as they will be,'—and now she confronted him again and spoke with the utmost vehemence, while her large eyes flashed fire,—'send their women to me, and——'

'What — keep them here, and you are

already so jealous! and what will you do with them?'

'Send them to join their husbands.'

The Nawab laughed—he could not help it: he made no reply, however, but rose and commenced walking slowly up and down the room.

'Leila, this is madness,' he said, after a long silence. 'I do not speak of your injustice and unkindness in harbouring a doubt or a suspicion of me, after the many years of love and devotion I have spent with you, but you only need to see and speak to these English ladies to find out how utterly unfounded your ideas are. They are not like you; they are not formed to be loved as you are—to be worshipped, doted on; they are made like men, to mix with them in the active duties of life as brothers. I want you to see them and to know them. To-day you shall have a visit from one of them: I am sure you will grow fond of her—you cannot help it——'

'Have you found it so, my lord?'

'You will receive her, will you not, Leila? and be courteous—she wants to cultivate your friendship.'

'As a slave I must do as my master bids me,' she answered.

'It is I who am the slave, not you,' he

said, returning and attempting to caress her, but she rose to leave the room.

'Tell me before you go,' he said, 'will you do as I wish?'

'I always do as I am ordered,' was the only reply he received, for she gathered her flowing robes in her hand and swept out of the room with the air of a queen.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

If you had been in the room where the interview related in the last chapter took place, about an hour after it was over, you might have seen the curtain at the door by which the Nawab had made his entrance and exit, opposite to that by which Leila had retired to her own private room, gently agitated, then cautiously raised at the corner, and through the opening thus made two piercing little black eyes peeping into the apartment. Seeing the room empty, the owner of the pair of eyes ventured to lift the curtain still more, and to take a good look all round, and then beckoning to some one from behind, advanced boldly across the threshold, followed by the second visitor. They were dressed in different costumes. The first comer was habited in a loose muslin petticoat reaching from the waist to the ankle, the upper part of the dress being that commonly worn by Asiatics of the better sort — a loosely fitting embroidered vest: a turban as a matter of course covered his head.

His features were not prepossessing. He was small in stature, though not inelegantly formed; his eyebrows were overhanging, but, with the exception of the eyebrows, he had, though an elderly person, not a trace of hair upon his face, which wore an expression at once painful and forbidding to a stranger. He was fat and well-to-do, as far as outward things went, but a glance at his hard features told you he was one of those human beings who are cut off from all sympathy and community of feeling for their fellow-mortals of either sex, and you could without much stretch of fancy imagine the possessor of them committing, or beholding unmoved, the greatest cruelties that unlicensed or inhuman tyranny was ever guilty of. The person who accompanied him was habited shabbily and untidily in the costume of a European woman. Her bonnet was of a very old fashion; a blue large shawl enveloped her not very elegant figure, and a drab muslin dress, without the pretence of any crinoline, reached as far as the ankles, and no further. Her features were entirely concealed by a thick veil.

'Wait here,' said the eunuch. 'I will send word to my mistress that you are come.'

So saying, he put his head outside the curtain and summoned, in a loud shrill voice, a

female attendant. She hastened in obedience to the command, and when she had come in, received orders to acquaint her mistress that the European lady was waiting her, at the command of the Nawab. The servant-girl, who did not trouble herself to conceal her features in the presence of the eunuch, cast a rapid glance at the figure and dress of the visitor, which did not seem to please her, to judge by the scornful manner in which she turned up her nose after the scrutiny, and departed to perform her errand. In a few minutes the rustling of female apparel announced the approach of the mistress of the house; the curtain was raised, and Leila, dressed in the most costly and extravagant style, though with the utmost taste and symmetry, with the same frown upon her brow, and a smile of haughty scorn upon her lips, entered in a most majestic way. She scarce deigned to notice the salutation of the visitor, but seated herself in the same place and position as she had received her husband just before. At a sign from the eunuch, the girl, who had followed her mistress into the room, retired; and after seeing her out, and making a very low salam, he too left the room, and the lady and her visitor were alone.

A silence ensued: Leila, not condescending

to appear aware even of the other's presence, amused herself by playing with a twisted silver tassel on the corner of the cushion against which she was leaning, in a way that threatened very soon to sever the connection between the tassel and the braid that held it.

At last the stranger spoke.——

As a gazelle dozing on a bed of leaves and moss in the shady recesses of a grove by a mountain-stream starts at the baying of hounds now well upon her scent, and listens with ears erect and sparkling eye for a moment ere she bounds from her pursuers, Leila suddenly awoke to life and energy. The frown disappeared from her brow; the disagreeably haughty look that had stamped her lovely features with such forbidding aspect, gave place to a smile, sweet and entrancingly beautiful; her pearl-like teeth glittered between her ruby lips, now partly opened in an attitude of deep attention: a flashing glance of intelligence and emotion lighting up and playing about her large dark eyes, betokened the movement of her deepest sympathies, and showed how the inmost chord in her heart had been played upon by some magic touch with skill and force enough to send its tones vibrating and thrilling through her whole soul and being. With her fixed

attention riveted on the speaker, she sat, or rather leant forward, one little hand pressed against her beating heart, the other supporting her delicate but commanding figure.

This sudden magic-like change in Leila had been brought about by the uncouth-looking stranger breaking the awkward silence that prevailed for some little time after they were left alone, in accents of the purest Circassian. Leila heard from the strange lips now addressing her the language of her native land, the language familiar to her earliest infancy, which she had not heard for many years. Who shall describe the sensation caused by it? Who shall imagine the associations awakened in the breast of a young and imaginative girl by such a reminiscence of the past? how visions of home, of the happy days of childhood, glowing with the brightest tints fond memory could throw into the picture—of her mother, her little brothers and sisters, of the games and sports that amused them the livelong day in the shady dells, or among the moss-clad rocks by the side of the rippling stream, where the ever-running water, bubbling among the pebbles, sung the sweetest music to the ears of childhood,—how these happy visions were chased away by others of a more sombre kind, and the scene changed

as by the touch of the enchanter's wand from joy to sorrow, to the deathbed of her doting mother, the separation of her family circle, the departure of her father to the battle-field against the Russian hosts, and the speedy, all too speedily-brought intelligence of his capture and his death—then the wail of the tribe, as the disastrous intelligence of defeat and impending captivity was communicated to them, assembled under the wide-spreading branches of the trees close to their villages where they were accustomed to meet—of the breaking-up of the ties of home, and the flight to distant inaccessible retreats for safety; and, finally, the rapid succession of events that led to her seeking to better her fortunes in a Turkish slave-market. All these memories, joyful and sad, sweet though painful, were awakened in overwhelming force by the sounds of her native language for the first time since her childhood poured into her ear. No wonder she started, and looked first awe-struck, then astonished, then entranced.

'Enough,' said the stranger, seeing the overpowering effect his first words had produced. 'I have found in this distant land one who has breathed the pure air of the Circassian mountains—one whose soul loves to linger among the haunts of her native land,

one with whom I have a common bond of sympathy and affection—then why should I retain longer this disguise?'

'Speak, who are you?' said Leila, as soon as she could recover herself sufficiently to give utterance to her thoughts.

'Are we alone—and safe from interruption?'

'I am mistress of my own apartments,' she replied haughtily: 'none dare enter here without my bidding—here we are safe from intrusion.'

'That is well—for I have been bold, and ventured on great peril.'

'I expected the English lady—you are not she—your dress is a disguise—hideous it is, and revolting—throw it aside, and let me gaze on one of the daughters of my own loved land undisfigured by these kaffir weeds.'

'You see before you, lady, not one of the daughters, but one of the sons of Circassia!' said the stranger, rising, as he threw off his disguise and stood before her in the costume worn by the noble youths of her native mountain-land, with whom she had so often, in happier days, danced on the greensward under the trees near her village home.

Leila forgot all her assumed, though none of her natural dignity of demeanour; she

started to her feet, catching in her left arm the folds of her loose robe as it fell off her back and shoulders, and gathering it round her as if the flimsy fabric could be a defence against some unknown peril, at the same time that she threw the other end with her right hand over her head and face. As she stood as if half doubting whether to fly from the room or to summon assistance, her lips parted, her head thrown back, and her beautiful figure displayed to the utmost advantage by the attitude she had assumed, she formed a model of grace which an artist would have known how to value. A strange gleam of emotion, of admiration, adoration, passion, flashed across the eyes and lips of the visitor, as he gazed for the moment entranced by the exquisite beauty of the being that stood before him: it was but momentary, and, well perhaps for him, passed unobserved by Leila herself. His coolness never for a moment deserted him. One word from Leila's lips, he knew, would summon those to her presence who would make short work of him, perhaps consign him to torture or to death in its most agonising and revolting form. The first time he looked straight at Leila, and she at him, there was a glance of recognition in her features, followed the instant after by an expression of bewilderment, anxiety, and

doubt. He laid his finger on his lips as a token of silence, then knelt and kissed the embroidered hem of her garment.

'Lady, let me entreat you, be silent. I am not here without a purpose, nor without cause, and at the peril of my life: but as you value the memory of the home of our youth, hear me patiently, and by those memories I swear that I mean you no wrong, no dishonour—nay, I will die a thousand deaths before I would injure a hair of your head.'

Again the spell of her native accents asserted its power. Leila was charmed by it—and yielded. She neither fled nor called her attendants, but remained standing in an uncertain attitude as if waiting to hear more. The stranger interpreted her silence favourably, and continued speaking.

'This is not the first time you have seen me, lady, nor are the rules and ceremonies that entrammel the actions of ordinary men to be observed with those who bear the commission of the Almighty; otherwise, bold and fearless as I am, I should not have ventured unbidden into your presence: but the mandates of the Almighty may not be lightly performed, nor may human customs be allowed to stand in the way of their fulfilment. Alla makes what use

he pleases of his creatures. I am a humble instrument in his hands, and I have been directed to look to you as another chosen instrument to work out his will. Do you yield obedience to the Divine command, or do you distrust the power of the Most High?'

'Those who bear messages from heaven,' replied Leila, who had not reseated herself, but remained standing, though with much more composure than she had before exhibited, 'bring some token of their authority.'

'Tokens or signs, you may have as many as you will, lady: you have not forgotten how I stood the test when I held that interview with the Nawab, which you watched from behind your curtain.'

'No, truly—but my lord was much shaken in his confidence after what passed at the tomb of the Saiyad, on whom be peace!'

'As the confidence of all are shaken who listen to the voice of the charmer, and allow their souls to be entangled in the net of Satan, which he spreads through his servants the kaffirs, on whom be the curse of God! After all, what are these signs and tokens?' he continued, as Leila remained silent. 'The magician, the conjurer, can acquire such authority over the powers of nature, such acquaintance

with the mysteries hidden to all common men who have neither the sense nor the perseverance to study them, as to produce the most astonishing wonders and performances, which you, lady, have doubtless often amused yourself with witnessing. And such I could produce and reproduce again and again till you fell asleep from sheer weariness of looking at them; but none but those who are endowed with power from the High One, who bear his message and his mission, can read the thoughts and feelings of the human heart, or hear words spoken at a distance and in concealment. Such power have I, through the mystic sympathy of mind with mind, to read the thoughts, to hear the words of those who are far away, to tell at this moment what is passing in the outer world.'

'Give me such proofs of your power and I believe,' said Leila.

'This morning you were displeased, lady—your soul, imprisoned in the petty circle that bounds human hopes and human feelings, unconscious of the bright and glorious future destined for you, you cherished in your inmost heart the poisonous serpent, jealousy—you repulsed your maidens in waywardness and ill-humour; you rebuked your husband, you resisted his approaches, you repelled his ad-

vances, you threw cold water on his love—his devoted, constant, ardent love—that love which every man must be a slave to, who beholds your exquisite, your divine beauty; you tried to bring about an angry altercation, but failed; you are jealous of those kaffir ladies—you are ambitious; you feel within yourself vain longings—aspirations after something, you know not what; there is a gnawing at the core of your heart—a yearning that cannot be satisfied—a desire that has no fulfilment. In the midst of wealth and luxury, and all the outward aids to human happiness and content, you are unhappy—in your solitary hours you ponder on the Unseen—you allow your mind to wander in realms your imagination alone knows of, to hold concert with beings that belong to another existence, and for years the first full draught of pleasure you have quaffed was from the cup of memory, filled with the associations awakened by first hearing the accents of your native language from my lips just now. As the sweet yet painful visions conjured up by those words of mine passed through your mind, you felt your heart beat with a strange, unknown joy you never felt before; your soul was lighted up with new life, and you were once again the Leila of long-past years. The innocence and peace of your

childhood, whither are they gone? the entrancing, thrilling pleasure of indulged passion—a passion pure and holy as you yourself are pure, though not the less of earth for all that —what is it now?—Childless, no baby lips have ever called you mother! no infant likeness of yourself, part of your own being, has ever nestled in your bosom, and drunk from its sweet fount the stream of life! That one longing desire of your whole soul has never been granted, and you feel at times as if your whole life were aimless. Deprived of the one hope of your existence, you have fed and fed on the disappointment till it has grown in your heart and sapped the very foundation of your health and life: only at intervals you have felt the stirrings of an impulse to do great things—the scintillations from the ever-burning flame of the Divine Will flashing through your soul; they have sparkled and disappeared, and left the waste ten times more dreary than before; yielding to the influence of external circumstance, vainly and wrongly imagined to be all-powerful and insuperable, you have seen nothing to be called your own, but blank despair; and now you find your own and only solace, your husband's love, cut off by a stroke of jealousy which has come between you and your sole source of happiness, and left your

heart broken and subdued, prepared to hear the Divine mission from my lips.'

Leila had, long before he ceased speaking, sunk on her cushion, and now sat with her hands pressed against her face. The scalding tears gushed from her eyes as the stranger spoke of her home and childhood's days, and trickled in pearly drops between her slender fingers as he continued, revealing, as it appeared to her, by magic or by Divine inspiration, in every word, more and more of that hidden life that she believed was known only to herself, and read aloud the characters traced out on the page of her memory; her emotion became so great, that her whole frame shook with it, and she with difficulty repressed the almost overbearing propensity to sob aloud.

He was silent. She withdrew her hands and saw—nay, felt—his gaze upon her; fascinated by the mesmeric influence he possessed, her imagination and susceptible nervous temperament made her an easy victim to the art, and as she kept her eyes fixed on him, she felt (or fancied so vividly that she felt, which was the same thing in its results) the power of his will exerted over her, and her own in subjection to it.

'You speak as one endowed with a mission

from Alla,' she said at length; 'what would you have me do?'

'Work out his plans in the destruction of the infidel—the revival of Islam! By the same power that I exercise over you, a power you feel but cannot express, bend your husband's will to yours. He has the opportunity to do great things for the faith: many kaffir lives are in his hands, yet, unfaithful, he spares, and strikes not; great things are in his power, but he is silent and still. It is for you to lead him in the right path, and, when once entered on it, to keep him there. It is for you to make him raise the green flag, and call on all the faithful throughout the district to rally round it. Let him send to hell the handful of unbelievers Alla has made over to him for punishment—even the women and children he should smite! Those that are spared may be spared—the women to be your slaves, to expiate in a life of servitude their sin against the faith of Islam; the children that are spared—and none beyond the age of eight years may be spared—may be eunuchs in your household, only with one exception. There is one who will be with you when I leave your presence; upon her the hand of destiny has laid its finger. She is singled out by the will of the Most High to be the bride of heaven.

Mark her, speak her fair, encourage her confidences, make her yours; and when the hour comes, and I bid you, deliver her over to me to fulfil her destiny. All this it is yours to accomplish; glorious destiny, lady—beloved of Alla! I shall be ever at hand to aid in carrying out your plans: though other duties call me elsewhere, I shall ever and anon return; at times you least expect, I shall appear and go. No doors are closed to me, no secrets hidden from me, no recesses too intricate or distant for me to penetrate into. Science has for me unfolded her greatest mysteries, and given me her instruments to work with, as my tools; these I will entrust to you as you need them, and instruct you how to use them; for to you I am bidden to impart much of that knowledge that Alla has revealed to me, and much that I have gained at his command, by long and lonely watches and deep study, and secret communion with those spirits that visit earth to make their presence known only to those chosen for the mighty privilege, who have subdued the passions and weakness of mortality, as I have, by frequent fastings and mortifications in the lonely desert and the wild mountain. Your soul, thirsting for knowledge, shall drink deep the intoxicating draught; yearning for action, the powers

of your mind shall grow daily more and more fitted to enable you to fulfil your destiny. As the task before you is more than human means can accomplish, more than human energy shall be bestowed upon you. And now I must leave you. But first, I will give you a few only of the instruments you may have to work with. 'Take these,' he added, giving her three or four small vials, distinguished by labels of different colours, and so small as easily to be concealed in the hollow of the hand, or the tiniest fold of her dress, and singling them out one after another as he proceeded to describe their several properties. 'This,' he said, 'will destroy life gradually; one drop every day administered with food will cause the lamp of life to grow fainter and fainter, till, on the fourth or fifth day, it is extinguished. Of this no traces remain after death. This destroys life instantaneously, but leaves many traces of its violent action in the contorted features and convulsion stereotyped by death. This causes deep sleep, deep and long; a small dose of one drop brings on lethargic feelings, during which the mind loves to dwell on sensual delights, or intoxicates itself with imaginary draughts of pleasure, and under their influence passion is easily excited: this vial contains a liquid of which a little thrown upon a handkerchief, and

pressed against the face, produces instant relaxation of the powers of life, during which the victim lies at your mercy; and this,' he added, bringing from his vest a small dirk or poniard, not much larger than a penknife, encased in a beautiful enamelled sheath, 'will cause instant and painless death. Look.'

He drew the blade, and exhibited, with all the pride of an artist, its secret virtue. It was small, sharp, and glittering like a diamond in the sun's rays.

'You have but to insert it here,' he pointed to his heart, 'or anywhere else; the effect is almost, not quite, as instantaneous in less vital parts. Touch this spring with your finger (the slightest touch will do it), and while the weapon penetrates to the organ of life, the poison—ten times more deadly than that of any serpent—is forced through a channel that runs through the instrument into the wound, and mixing with the blood, produces almost instantaneous death. There are many other gifts and many powers I will impart to you at a future time. Now I must bid you farewell. There is one more word only I need say; it is this—trust none of your household except the head eunuch, Sidi Gulzar.'

Almost before she was aware of it, as if desirous to avoid questioning, he kissed her hand,

shuffled on his disguise, and left the room. She heard him outside summoning Sidi Gulzar to conduct him from the palace, and the sound of his retreating footsteps told her he was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was only under a stern sense of duty that Amy was induced to yield an unwilling consent to Mr. Dacres's proposition, that she should cultivate Leila's acquaintance, with the object of fathoming, if possible, the depth of the intrigue in which it was believed she was concerned. From whatever side Amy viewed it, however specious were the arguments she used to convince herself to the contrary, it was not an open and fair offer of friendship she was about to make to the Eastern beauty. She was going expressly and avowedly to win her confidence, not exactly for the purpose of betraying it, but to make use of it; and the first step to this would, of necessity, be a sort of betrayal. Amy was guileless and unskilled in the ways of the world—unskilled in the art of concealing under a mask, either of language, look, or manner, the real promptings of the heart and the expression of true feelings. Hence her difficulty.

Having persuaded herself, or rather allowed

Dacres to persuade her, as one 'who, though convinced against her will, has just the same opinion still,' she dressed herself in as becoming a manner as circumstances and the scanty resources of her diminished wardrobe would allow, and was escorted across the quadrangle to the outer door of the seraglio, whence, under the guidance of Leila's attendants, she was ushered into the saloon to which the reader has already been introduced.

Whether Leila had not yet sufficiently recovered from the excitement of the scene she had recently gone through, or whether she wished to show a little slight to the visitor she had been desired to receive, I know not, but it is certain that Amy had plenty of leisure to examine with her wondering eyes the interior of the apartment into which she had been ushered before the mistress of it made her appearance. What a contrast to the crowded, noisy room Amy had just left!—where, in spite of all her efforts to produce tidiness and comfort, untidiness and discomfort were the chief characteristics—where the open and unprotected window admitted the full glare of the noonday sun (so jealously excluded from all the houses usually occupied by the better classes)—where the children were unceasingly troublesome, having no place to play in, and

being always in the way; while other minor evils dwindled into insignificance before the perpetual torment kept up by the myriads of flies that put anything like rest out of the question. A great contrast to this was Leila's room, — so quiet, so still, so comfortably darkened, so cool, and such a delicious fragrance from flowers and other perfumes filled the air! Amy would have given much if she could have spent with her own friends even a few hours out of every day in so delightful a retreat; and she could not help thinking, with a pang of envy and regret, of the comforts of the home she had so long enjoyed and so lately lost. Oh, how she wished she could manage to bring her sister and the children there! how they would enjoy the relief from the glare and noise, and flies, to which they were exposed! The room was lighted by a skylight from the top, but the sunbeams were not suffered to stream with scorching glare through unstained glass, but, passing through a medium that absorbed the brightest rays, they threw a subdued —if I may use the phrase, a 'dim religious' light, into the room. There was scarcely enough daylight for needle or worsted work; but Leila never amused herself with these, nor did she ever read in this room. It was not too dark for all she wanted to do. There

were no chairs or tables—nothing more uncomfortable than soft silk-covered couches, laid on strips of Turkey carpet, round the edge of the floor, or in places here and there. The greater part of the floor had no carpet or covering at all, and it did not need any, for it was pure and clean, and much prettier than any carpet would have made it, for it was of polished tessellated marble, familiar enough to all my readers who have seen the interior of an Eastern palace, or some of the famous buildings, such as the Taj, which serve to redeem the works of Eastern architects from the character of barbaric splendour with which they are so commonly associated. In the centre of the room there was a fountain, with a jet throwing some two or three feet high a stream of cool water, which, breaking into a thousand mimic cascades, fell splashing into the transparent crystal reservoir below. I have noticed the fragrant odour that filled the air. It was produced partly by fresh flowers, and partly by aromatic herbs, and artificially-compounded perfumes mingled with such taste as to charm the senses. Pretty as the apartment of Leila's was by day, it was ten times more beautiful at night when lighted up; for the ceiling was lined with shining mirrors interlaced with silver filagree, and each lamp

was reflected ever so many times from the surface of the polished mirrors; and the bright light thus produced, with the rich colour of the carpets and cushions, and golden hangings and embroidery of the curtains over the doorways, and the sparkling fountain that played incessantly day and night, made it look like a fairy palace. By night it seemed a fitting place for mirth, and music, and dancing; by day it was marvellously adapted to court repose—not dull, leaden sleep that drowns the senses in oblivion, but repose. There, reclining at ease on the cushions, you might lie and listen the livelong day to the ceaseless music of that softly-splashing fountain, inhaling the perfumes of the air, and, with eyes half closed beneath the subdued sunlight, dream the day-dreams that filled up one-half of Leila's waking life. Such day-dreaming may be pleasant, but it is dangerous, for we are creatures of imagination and of sense.

So peculiar was the effect of the light, and the air loaded with fragrance, and the monotonous though pleasing sound of the falling water, upon the nerves and senses, that Amy was startled upon Leila's entrance to find that she had in that short time succumbed in a slight degree to the influences around her. Nor was it till Leila stood close to her, and

the sound of her sweet musical voice fell upon her ear, that Amy fully awoke to the consciousness of her presence. Then all at once the sense of dissatisfaction with herself and her mission returned with renewed force to her mind, making her feel awkward, and for the first time in her life, perhaps, at a loss how to behave. Leila's kind and winning tone, however, her apparently artless grace, and the unconstrained yet ladylike and elegant deportment, acquired in no other school than that of nature, soon set the bashful visitor at ease, and ere a quarter of an hour had elapsed, Amy found herself, to her own surprise, conversing with this Circassian beauty, this child of nature in the seclusion of her harem, in familiar—nay, almost affectionate terms. The want of fluency of language was a great hindrance to her, as she found herself at fault a hundred times with ideas she endeavoured but failed to express; but her mistakes and blunderings added a charm to their *tête-à-tête*. Leila, with an almost childish pride, showed her new friend all her jewels and treasures, her dresses, trinkets, and ornaments, and seemed pleased when the English lady praised their beauty and costliness. Their interview was so much taken up with trifles, that Amy found it would be almost impossible for her to do much to-

wards the object of her visit in that first interview. She could but drop a hint here and there, and endeavour to gather from some hasty answer to an apparently casual remark now and again Leila's views on matters external to the walls of the harem. But she was either very much on her guard, or really unwilling to allow considerations of serious or weighty affairs of real life to interfere with the pleasure she evidently felt in the society of her new acquaintance. One thing only connected with the present state of affairs outside her walls did she dwell upon with anything like warmth, or at any length; and that was upon the idea of keeping the ladies of the party under her protection, while the officers went to join the army in the field.

The visit had lasted about an hour, when Amy's anxiety was aroused by unmistakeable sounds of popular excitement outside. Far removed as they were from the outer world, the sound of men's voices chattering and shouting, the hurrying to and fro, the echo of impatient footsteps, and manifold signs and symptoms of agitation, penetrated the walls, and attracted Amy's attention long before that of her companion. She rose to go; Leila detained her, holding her hand affectionately, and talking, and urging her to renew her visit on the

morrow, and bring some of the children with her. The report of a distant cannon-shot made Amy still more anxious to be gone; still Leila detained her on one pretence or another, for she apparently did not attach any importance to the sounds which caused her visitor so much uneasiness.

Amy, however, did at last manage to tear herself away; and as she wends her steps back to the room where her friends await her, full of gloomy forebodings and anxious fears, let us turn back for a moment to see what had caused this commotion.

I have recorded above Dacres's expressed intention of repairing with his subordinates to their offices as usual that day, with the object of keeping up as long as possible a show of outward tranquillity and organisation. So, at the usual hour, accompanied by Harley and Burleigh, he repaired to the cutchery, or court-house. Much to their astonishment, though they took care not to express any, they found nearly all the native subordinates and employés at their posts too. All took their accustomed seats; the natives opened their bundles of papers, pens and ink, and proceeded, or pretended at any rate to proceed, with the ordinary work just as if nothing unusual had occurred in their neighbourhood for the last

three weeks. Meantime, their European superiors sat with their revolvers loaded, though concealed about their persons, their horses being kept at the door ready saddled.

About noon they were disturbed by distant sounds of ominous import, which they all indeed understood, for they were all more than half anticipating some fresh outbreak. At the same time, the natives about the court began to whisper and look anxious; and some, on one pretext or another, left, and never returned.

I will not detain the reader with details of the attack and escape. Though feeling it his duty, and thinking it might have a beneficial effect on the public mind, to keep up as long as possible the outward semblance of authority, Dacres had no intention of allowing himself and his companions to fall a sacrifice to the violence of a lawless mob, and to be caught in a trap; so, as soon as their approach to the court-house and subsequent disposition of their force left no room to doubt that their intention was to attack the place and cut off the inmates, Dacres and his two fellow-civilians mounted their horses and rode leisurely away, just as the first shot from the gun which the rebels had planted in the road, about a thousand yards from the cutchery, opened fire. In half an hour the place was gutted and set fire to,

and the mob was wending its way slowly towards the palace walls, bent on doing as much mischief as it could.

Amy was much relieved, on rejoining her friends, to find that the disturbance which had caused her so much uneasiness, had given them very little real alarm. Dacres, Harley, and Burleigh were back among them safe, and the mob was only howling like a pack of jackals outside the walls.

Amy had to run the gauntlet of inquisitive questioning directly she appeared; for they all knew where she had been, and were all anxious to learn something about the person who was supposed to have so much influence in the palace and the neighbourhood.

'Does she eat betel?'

'Does she whip her slaves?'

'I'll answer all your questions when I come back—there's Mr. Dacres beckoning me away; I am an important personage now,' she said, laughing, and looking back at the little mob of inquisitive friends as she tripped away, accompanied by her brother-in-law.

'Did you find out anything?' Dacres asked when they were alone.

'I did my best,' said Amy, laughing; 'but I am but a poor diplomatist, and my knowledge of the language is very limited. How-

ever, I had better describe my interview from the beginning, if you will have patience and hear me out: I'll make it as clear as I can.'

'Yes, yes,' said both her hearers; 'go on.'

'She was all kindness, I assure you, and such a beautiful creature!'

'We've heard all that before,' said her brother, good-humouredly.

'Well, don't tease me; if you will employ ladies on diplomatic missions, you must put up with their way of doing things. I certainly cannot believe there is any unkind feeling towards us lurking in her heart; I can easily conceive her doing anything, you know. She is the most wonderful woman I ever saw; such energy, such intellect, such a figure——!'

'Ahem!' said Stevens.

'And the most exquisite feet—oh, if you had but seen her feet!'

'One thing she seems bent upon,' continued Amy, 'and I should say what she made up her mind to do was done somehow or other. She is determined that we, that is, all the ladies and children, shall go and live in her part of the house, while all you gentlemen go to Delhi and join the army. She will take care of us, she says, and keep us safe; and when all is quiet again, you can come back and fetch us.'

'Did she say the Nawab had suggested that?' asked Dacres, looking serious.

'No; she said particularly it was her own idea, and she asked me what I thought of it; and I said, as I know I should if I were a man, I thought the gentlemen would all like it very much.'

'Like what?'

'Why, getting rid of us women for a time, so as to be able to get away and join the army and fight: and she is very fond of children, she said, and wants me to take the children to see her to-morrow.'

'She invited you to visit her again, then?'

'Oh, yes; why, I assure you, we were the dearest friends; she said nothing had given her so much pleasure for a long time as my visit, and begged me to go again.'

'What country is she from? Turkish, isn't she?'

'Oh, no; Circassian—she is a Circassian—and, oh, so beautiful!'

'Were you able to make any allusions to the strange visitor?'

'Yes. I must tell you, you know, I can't speak Hindoostanee at all fluently or well, and so I may not have made myself understood—or I may have offended her, or transgressed some rule of Oriental etiquette with which I

am unacquainted—or very possibly it was the suggestion or suspicion of anyone having been near her that ought not to have been; but when I mentioned a stranger having been seen near the palace, she seemed quite affected —indeed, for the moment, totally changed in manner; her large black eyes literally flashed at me, and her lips were compressed tightly together, and her breath seemed to come so quickly, I really was afraid she was going to be taken ill—I was quite frightened—but I explained myself, in my garbled, hesitating way, that it was some one who had been seen in the garden; and when I said "yesterday," she seemed suddenly calmed, and said, "Oh, yesterday, was it?" Then she said something about her guards having orders to fire on anyone that appeared in the garden who had no business there; but she is evidently not in the secret, and is most excited and enraged if anyone hints such a thing.'

By this time the noise and tumult raised by the mob, from whose clutches the three civilians had only just escaped, had increased to such an extent as to create the greatest alarm in the Nawab's household. All was confusion, hurry, and excitement. Further conversation in private was impossible. Dacres heard his name called repeatedly, as if some

one was looking for him, and got up to find who it was that was calling. The story of the attack on the court-house and the flight from the mob had been freely described and circulated by Harley and Burleigh, so that everyone knew the cause of the disturbance outside. The Nawab himself was very much alarmed lest the mob should turn upon his palace; his own men, however, appeared resolute, and as the European officers made a good strong party, and the faithful sepoys and irregulars who had come in with them were tolerably strong in numbers too, he hoped, with the aid of some old guns that were ready mounted, to be able to keep the mob at bay if they did attack. They, however, apparently had no intention of doing anything more than plundering first and then destroying the civilians' residences and the court-house; for, after effecting this, and setting on fire anything that would burn that could not be carried away, or that was not worth carrying away, they dispersed of their own accord and returned to the city.

As Dacres came up from the lower garden, whither they had all repaired to see what could be seen from the walls, he was suddenly accosted by Thurston, who was accompanied by Asgar Ally and another native.

'Just the person we're looking for,' said Thurston. 'Here's our friend Asgar Ally has found a man wandering about looking for you; he says he is a spy.'

'Bring him along,' said the commissioner, leading the way into the room, and seating himself at his private table. 'Who is it?'

'A spy from the head-quarters camp,' replied Asgar Ally. 'I found him wandering about, looking for the "Bura Sahib," the commissioner. I told him I would try to find him, and while I was looking I met this gentleman, who said he would try to find the sahib for me.'

'Who are you?' said Dacres to the native.

The man made no reply, but grinned. At the same time, he wriggled about in a very strange way with his hand under the fold of a large cloth or sheet which he wore wrapped round him.

'Take care,' said Thurston; 'perhaps he has a loaded pistol about him.'

The man at last produced, not a pistol, but a little piece of paper, and handed it to Dacres.

It was covered with Persian writing, and was a firman or royal decree from the emperor at Delhi, addressed to no one in particular, but to all chiefs, nobles, rajahs, &c. &c., in Hin-

doostan, calling on them to raise the standard of insurrection everywhere, murder all the English, and hasten with as many troops as they could collect to Delhi. It was sealed with the royal seal; but the paper was a very small fragment, and looked, Dacres thought, as he turned it round and round to examine it, very much like a piece torn off a large and entire scroll which bore the royal seal.

'Why, how now—you villain, do you know what is written here?' said Dacres angrily to the man. 'You'll be hanged for this.'

The fellow only grinned and showed his teeth, and rolled about his eyes, showing the whites of them in such a way as to lead them to believe he was feigning idiotcy. The more Dacres tried to frighten him with threats, the more he grinned—and seemed to enjoy the prospect of being hanged most thoroughly.

'Take the grinning brute away, and put him in confinement,' said Dacres, turning to Asgar Ally.

But, instead of going quietly away, the prisoner wriggled himself about a great deal more; at last he took up the end of the sheet or cloth he had about him, tore open the hem at the corner of it with his teeth, and produced another bit of paper, which he handed to the commissioner, grinning more than ever.

'What, another!' said Dacres, taking the paper and opening it. 'What's this?'

It was a letter from Sir Marmaduke Mastodon, political agent with the head-quarter camp at Selimpore, written in the closest and smallest hand possible, in Greek letters and the French language. It required considerable labour and attention to make it out. It ran as follows:—

'*To the Commissioner of Islamabad.*

'Troops healthy—much want of reinforcements — nothing known of your district — communication cut off — can only correspond with spies. Don't trust the Nawab—a letter from him to the King of Delhi has fallen into my hands—you can trust no native chief. Send news. Watch for a European called Thurston—he has been in your neighbourhood—his name is attached to several seditious proclamations taken from rebels. Give the bearer 150 rupees, and send him back with double despatch — one for friend and one for foe.

'P.S. Don't hang T.'

Long before Mr. Dacres had succeeded in deciphering this troublesome letter, the news had spread far and wide of a messenger

having came from Selimpore, and a small crowd gathered round his table eagerly waiting for such information as he thought it best to communicate. He told them all the contents of the letter, except the allusion to the Nawab and Mr. Thurston.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was not till the evening that Dacres had an opportunity of speaking to Stevens in private, and consulting him on the tenor of the intelligence received from Selimpore. Meantime he had by invitation attended the Nawab and held another private interview with him.

Asgar Ally's behaviour had given rise to grave suspicions and serious doubts of his fidelity in the mind of more than one of the officers. His conduct, indeed, was easily susceptible of explanation on one supposition, viz., that his fidelity was beyond all danger of temptation, and his zeal in the cause of the English fugitives untiring. But those who can appreciate the peril of their present position, and the many sources of the deepest anxiety that surrounded them, will readily understand the difficulty Dacres and the other officers experienced in placing full and undoubted trust in any Asiatic, particularly one whose antecedents were so unsatisfactory as

those of Asgar Ally. He seemed to keep aloof as much as possible from the English officers, even from his own associates, and spent the greater part of his time in the company of the Nawab's retainers; he ate with them, smoked with them, talked with them. All who really trusted him, among whom Mr. Thurston was the chief, easily accounted for this by saying that he was going the best possible way to work to serve his friends: his avoidance of the English officers and the faithful sepoys was a mask, under which he concealed his real designs, which were to worm himself into the confidence of the enemy, and then betray it to the fugitives. This explanation was not, however, altogether satisfactory, and some of them suspected him so much that they would willingly have dispensed with his allegiance altogether if they could, and would gladly have seen him go over openly to the enemy. It was a season of doubt, anxiety, and the extremest peril, and none realised the responsibility of his position more than Dacres. One error in judgment, one wrong stroke of policy, one mistake in human character, and all might be lost. The best resource, indeed, was to have no policy at all,—at least, attempt no active diplomacy, but to leave events pretty much

to themselves, and watch them, being ever ready to take advantage of the slightest circumstance that might occur capable of being turned in any way to their advantage. Yet this course it was impossible to pursue. When so much plotting was going on all round, it was imperative on those who might be the victims of it, to penetrate as far as they could the disguise under which their enemies were acting, and to discriminate friend from foe.

Graham and Harley returned late in the afternoon. They had ridden out for ten miles on the Delhi road, and had been successful in discovering unobserved and watching for some little distance in its progress the mutineers' column. They were in full march for Delhi, there could be no doubt of that; but the account they gave of the appearance of the column on the line of march was amusing. The native officers, now promoted to generals, colonels, captains, and a 'brilliant staff,' as the penny-a-liners say, were all mounted on their officers' chargers, and in full-dress uniform. The cavalry led, the infantry followed, and the artillery brought up the rear. They had an advance guard and a strong rear guard, but between the rear of the column and the rear guard was a space

of at least three miles of road with vehicles and beasts of burden of all kinds and descriptions, heavily laden with plunder of the most miscellaneous sort. Buggies and carriages were filled with boxes, pictures, &c.; elephants, camels, even horses, were all burdened with property; a large number of litters bore along the inmates of the hospitals, and a number of spare baggage-cattle followed, which were employed in bringing up stragglers, or burdened with stray articles that had fallen on the road, or been left in consequence of the vehicles or bearers breaking down. With the exception of a great deal of talking, singing, and laughing, and other disorderly behaviour, strict discipline was maintained. No man was allowed to fall out of the column or to lag behind; flanking parties of horsemen rode on each side, about a hundred yards from the column, for the purpose of keeping a look-out, and seeing that there was no straggling or desertion; and Graham and Harley's party had some little difficulty in escaping detection from these scouts. They were all going along at a good pace, and seemed determined to get over their ground as speedily as possible. The country the two officers had ridden over seemed quiet enough: husbandmen were engaged in their usual avo-

cations, seemingly indifferent to the change of masters; they, indeed, cautiously avoided going near the mutineers, and those engaged in the field near the road left their work and ran off at the approach of the column; while the people the two officers met in the villages they passed through, offered them no violence or insult, though they showed them no sort of respect.

The first opportunity Dacres had of speaking to Stevens alone, he showed him the despatch he had received from Sir Marmaduke Mastodon, told him to read it, and asked what he thought of it.

'I think,' said he, after spelling out the missive with great difficulty, 'that Sir Marmaduke has been made a dupe of by some designing man. As to that part about the Nawab, why, it is likely enough to be correct. I could have told you as much as that, that he's not to be trusted; but just now we can't help ourselves. We must trust him; but I look upon the suspicions cast upon Thurston as in the highest degree unfair—unjust. Have you shown it to him?'

'No, certainly not. I have no intention of doing so; nor do I think it would be advisable.'

'Perhaps not. I like that postscript, though,

to his letter—terse and business-like: "P.S. Don't hang T." Capital!'

'Yes, it's to the point, though not needed; but I'll keep my eye on him all the same. Somehow, I have an unconquerable conviction that he'll come to the gallows in spite of me, though. I have never forgiven him the cold-blooded way in which he defended the acts of the mutineers just before he went to see his friends.'

'Prejudice, Dacres, prejudice, depend on it. Dismiss the idea from your mind. It is unworthy of you, and Sir Marmaduke too. One of these days you will be sorry for the injustice you have done the man, though only in thought. Anything new from the Nawab to-day?'

'Yes, I was going to tell you. He is full of this notion of our all going to Delhi, and leaving the ladies and children with him.'

'That's the plan Amy spoke of, isn't it, which was suggested by his wife?'

'Yes.'

'And did he never hint at it before?'

'Never.'

'It looks as if it originated with the lady; can we trust her?'

'How can I tell? I never saw her. From all I hear, I should say yes. What do you say to the notion?'

'You wouldn't have asked me if Mrs. Dacres had been here.'

'Why not?'

'Why not!—because you would then have seen the folly of it. I for one will not go away and leave my wife and family here, and I do not think any of the married people will. Good heavens! what might not befal them in our absence? I cannot conceive anything more dreadful.'

'I dare say you are right. Of course, we all stand or fall together. If the married people refuse it, there is an end to it at once. But if, as you suggest, the thing has been started by this lady with some ulterior object, it would be as well to try and find out her plans.'

'You are too fond of plotting and counter-plotting, Dacres. Leave these devils to plot; let us act only in a straightforward way, and leave the result to Providence.'

'Providence, my dear fellow, always helps those that help themselves. Depend on it, we were intended to make use of the wits Heaven has given us; not to depend on them, of course, but in submission to the Divine will. I hope always to act in a straightforward way, but still I think we must make some attempt to find out what is going on. There is that

crafty devil, Asgar Ally, now; we might sit twirling our thumbs and trusting to Providence, as being unable to fight the man with his own weapons, till we found out suddenly some fine day that he had woven his web so close round us that there was no breaking it. I look on that fellow as a most dangerous brute; he's as deep as a well, and crafty as a Jesuit.'

'Talking of Jesuits, I wonder you don't make out that your *bête noire* Thurston is a Jesuit in disguise.'

'There is precious little disguise about him. If he is a Jesuit, he is only what he seems to be. But I don't care for him half as much as for this Asgar Ally. If the fellow were really faithful, he is worth anything, absolutely invaluable to us; but if not—if he is playing false, the very devil himself couldn't do us more mischief.'

'Talk of the devil, and you'll see his horns,' said Stevens, pointing into the garden just below them. They were on the balcony, and it was quite dark. Dacres looked in the direction indicated, and there he saw a figure, just discernible in the gloom, advancing towards the bottom of the verandah.

'Who's that?' said Dacres, in a loud whisper.

'Asgar Ally, sahib,' said the new-comer, in another whisper.

'What do you want?'

'To speak to the commissioner, sahib.'

'Come up here, then.'

'Will the sahib be kind enough to come down here? His servant wishes to speak into his ears alone.'

'Stay here, Stevens. I'll come back by-and-by. Let me go and see what this fellow has to say.' And so saying, he went.

Asgar Ally led him some little distance from the house to a spot deep in the shade of some lofty trees whose branches overhung the pathway. It was a secluded place, and one where, except by the merest accident, they were not likely to be interrupted.

Here the trooper paused, and turning round suddenly, confronted Dacres. The latter instinctively let his hand rest on the handle of his revolver.

'The sahib mistrusts his faithful servant,' said Asgar Ally, 'and looks on him with an evil eye, and no wonder; all my friends and brethren, and associates, are such ungrateful unbelievers, that it is right and proper you should distrust us all: but recollect, sahib, all men are not the same.'

'You know, Asgar Ally, we English always

speak the truth. I scorn to deceive you, or to tell you what is false. I have distrusted you —I do distrust you—and, in a certain degree, all of your religion and race; but still I am not blind. Give me proof of your trustworthiness, show me a claim to confidence, and not only will we depend on you, but you shall be amply rewarded.'

'As to rewards, we must think of that when the bird is out of his net,' rejoined the other. 'At present, he is fast beset, and in great danger. Nevertheless, Asgar Ally will release him if anyone can.'

'What proof, then, can you offer of your sincerity? You know the officers all trusted their men to the very last, were always kind to them—yet how did they behave?'

'I know it; don't speak of the kaffirs. The curse of God be on them! But this proof I give you that I am not ungrateful to your salt —I don't ask your confidence, but I will give you information and advice, and when the former turns out correct you will take the latter. I have been a great deal with the Nawab's men to-day. The Nawab wants to persuade all you sahibs to go to Delhi, and leave the ladies and children behind. I know it—it has been commonly talked about by the Nawab's men all day. They think you are

sure to agree to the plan, because they think you can't help doing what the Nawab advises you; but I tell you, don't do it!'

'Why not?'

'Because there is a plot laid: a party of men are told off to start this night,—a strong party—they have a gun with them, and about 150 men, to lie in wait for you at a particular spot where they will be able to attack you, one by one, in a narrow road; and then—what need I say more?'

'Did the Nawab order this?'

'Yes.'

'How do you know?'

'I know it—you don't believe me?—very well, come with me at two o'clock to-night, and I will show you the party marching off.'

'What is their intention, then, with regard to the ladies and children?'

'I dare not say.'

'Speak—you are not speaking to a woman.'

'No, I will not say—but I must go now—let none of the officers leave this place till the European soldiers come here, and you can all leave together. Now, with your permission, I will go. All the sepoys and troopers suspect me of being a traitor—do you, sahib, not listen to them, or pretend only to believe them. I shall not speak to you again till to-morrow

night, unless you will turn out at two o'clock and witness the troops marching, as I told you.'

'Certainly I will;' and the two separated, Dacres returning to Stevens, who was on the balcony anxiously expecting him, and Asgar Ally disappearing among the shrubs in the garden.

Dacres and Stevens were joined by Harley, who came up just as the former returned to his companions. Dacres then recounted all that had passed.

'Well, I'll tell you what I think,' said Harley—'I vote, we remove our lodgings—I don't like this neighbourhood.'

'Where can we move to? that's the question.'

'It is a difficulty, certainly—but I should say, from this story you have just told me, that the Nawab wanted to get rid of us; and if we don't make room quite so quickly as he wishes, why, he may remove us against our will—we couldn't hold out the place for a day.'

'I think we could,' said Stevens, 'and I vote for staying where we are, and facing all odds. As long as these men now with us remain staunch, I am certain we could hold out the place—for a short time, mind you, not for ever—till the detachment comes from Mitterpore.'

'Suppose none comes?' said Harley.

'Oh, you may go on supposing anything you like,' replied Stevens,—'but we must act on probabilities. The probabilities are, that we shall have a strong force of European soldiers sent down here on camels the instant our messenger reaches.'

'Don't make too sure of that,' said Harley: 'of course, I don't want to croak and to make things out worse than they are—they are bad enough as it is, God knows—but we must prepare ourselves for every contingency. In the first place, how do you know there are any Europeans at Mitterpore at all?'

'Everyone says so.'

'Well, allowing there is a small force, the chances are, there has been a mutiny there as well as here, and that they want every available man to enable them to hold their own; and even if there are any men to spare, our generals and brigadiers are such a set of thick-headed fools, that I'll bet ten to one they find out some reason or other why they ought not to send any reinforcements. I've no faith in the Mitterpore dodge; we must depend on ourselves, I fear, to hold our own for many months. If you say this place can be defended, well and good. I'm ready; let's do our best, and put it in the best possible state of defence.

But if we could find another defensible spot a little further from this cursed city, I should be better pleased—that's all.'

'Is the proximity of the city your only objection?'

'No; I don't like the neighbourhood of the Nawab. I don't particularly distrust him—I don't distrust his men more than I do any native who has shown no open signs of hostility; but what dependence have we on his men? Or even if he is to be depended on, how do we know his men may not play him the same trick that our sepoys did us? We are doubtful of him; we are certain his men are ready to turn against us the instant he lets them: they can't do us much harm; at least, they won't attempt anything open as long as our own men are staunch; but I don't like this coming and going all day long between them: "Evil communications —" you know. Depend on it, we should be far safer if we were further apart.'

'No doubt there's a great deal of truth in what you say, Harley,' replied Dacres; 'and if you can find as good a place as this anywhere else that we can move to easily, why, I'll agree to your plan—and I don't doubt the Nawab will thank you.'

'All right; then I'll look about for eligible

lodgings for single men — a watering-place preferred, eh! Good night; I shall turn in.'

The two others followed his example; but Dacres, not unmindful of his engagement with Asgar Ally, arose at half-past one and went to the trysting-place. Asgar Ally soon after made his appearance, and conducted him through the garden to a side gate leading out into the high road; there they stationed themselves, concealed under the shade of the wall, in such a position that they could effect an easy retreat into the garden, and conceal themselves among the shrubs if detected. They had not been there more than half an hour before they heard a great neighing of horses, then men's voices, and then rumbling of cart-wheels; soon after, the head of a column appeared in the gloom, advancing along the road in the direction of the open country towards the Delhi road. As they passed within a few feet of where Dacres and his companion were lying concealed, they were able to form a pretty correct estimate of the strength of the force: as near as Dacres could guess without counting each man, there were a hundred and fifty men, all mounted and well armed; and behind them, drawn by six yoke of oxen, came one of the Nawab's pieces of ordnance, an iron eight-pounder gun. As the

men passed, Dacres distinctly overheard many of them talking, in a laughing, boisterous way, about 'kaffirs;' and in connection with that word another of ominous import was very constantly mentioned, and that was 'katl,' or massacre.

After they were gone, Asgar Ally came up to Dacres, and said,

'Do you trust me?'

Dacres clasped his hand in silence; he understood it, and they parted without another word.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

EXTREMELY anxious to know what explanation the Nawab would have to give of the expedition, the departure of which he had himself witnessed, Dacres took the first opportunity of seeing him on the following morning, after having passed a sleepless and unrefreshing night. Amy was of course taken into confidence, and desired to find out, if she could, during her interview with Leila that day, whether she was cognisant or not of the departure of the men; for was it not possible, after all, that Asgar Ally was playing false? The first impulse of Dacres's mind, on seeing such a remarkable and literal verification of his words, was that he had done him a great injury in suspecting him, and that he was fully to be depended on. Under the influence of this feeling, he had warmly pressed his hand, to assure him of his gratitude and confidence; but on calmly reflecting on the matter, as he lay on his bed, it occurred to him that, after all, this apparent corroboration of Asgar Ally's

words might be easily accounted for in many ways. True, the men had started at the hour and in the direction he had said they would: the strength and formation of the detachment was precisely what he had described; but what was easier than for him to have got the information that such a body of men were to march at a certain time on some mission of their master's, and to have supplied the connecting links in the chain of hypothesis, so as to make his story a plausible one? This view of the case was borne out, in a great measure, by the explanation of the affair given by the Nawab. He said, when Dacres, as it were, casually alluded to the march of a body of men the night before, that he had sent a party out to secure the pass of Kooriwalla, about twenty miles from Islamabad, where the road crossed a range of rugged and not very elevated hills, the boundary of the district on that side, and by which he anticipated the descent of a considerable body of dacoits, or banditti, who, he had been told, were in the neighbourhood, bent on making the best of the opportunity for plunder afforded by the unsettled and disorganised state of the country. Another object, he said, he had in view in detailing the force, was to diminish as much as possible the number of armed retainers in and about the

palace and city. They were very ill-affected towards the British government, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could succeed in restraining them from committing any open act of hostility. It was, therefore, with the utmost readiness that he had seized on so fair a pretext as that afforded by the necessity for protecting the pass, to send a large body of them away. On the other hand, the Nawab was most urgent and importunate in his endeavours to persuade Dacres to accept the offer of the shelter of his palace for the ladies and children, while the officers made their way across country to join the army. This, again, seemed to corroborate Asgar Ally's story, and was further supported by the character given by the Nawab in Sir Marmaduke Mastodon's despatch.

Amy had no very satisfactory information to give when she returned from her visit to Leila. She had tried to persuade her sister to let her take the children over for Leila to see, but Mrs. Stevens absolutely refused; her mother's instinctive dread of danger would not let her part from her little ones at all in these times of constant peril. She had no wish to make Leila's acquaintance herself, and the children should not go without her. Amy, disappointed and displeased at what she

considered a mark of want of confidence in her on her sister's part, did not ask any of the other mammas to trust their little ones, and Leila looked displeased and angry when she saw her visitor come in alone, and unattended by any of the children she had promised to bring. She appeared, however, Amy said, soon to recover her temper, and conversed as affably and kindly as the day before, even more so. She seemed, however, a good deal disturbed. At times her mind seemed to be altogether occupied in reflections of whose character her words were no index whatever. When Amy endeavoured cautiously to sound her as to whether she was aware of the departure of any body of men from the palace the previous night, she exhibited total ignorance and indifference on the subject; but she was extremely energetic in urging on Amy's mind the advantage of carrying out the suggestion of the ladies moving into her part of the house, and the officers leaving them there while they went to join the army. She exhausted, indeed, every argument that could be adduced in favour of the scheme, even accusing the officers at last of faint-heartedness and effeminacy, in preferring to remain with their wives and sisters and children, instead of going to join the army then engaged

in active operations against the rebels. To all of which Amy of course replied that she was not capable of giving an opinion, but had full confidence in the judgment of those whose duty it was to decide. She promised, however, at Leila's earnest entreaty, to go and spend the night with her. Dacres and her brother-in-law shook their heads when she told them of this intention; but she overruled their objections very soon, by assuring them so strongly of Leila's affection and goodness of heart, and kindness, that they felt they could no longer distrust her. Besides, there was much force in the argument Amy dwelt very strongly upon, that if she was to play her part as spy to any real purpose, it was only by gaining the confidence of Leila that it was to be done, and to effect this end a certain amount of risk must be run; not that she would allow there was any risk in just having her bed moved over to Leila's rooms, and spending one night with her instead of in the company of the other ladies.

Harley returned late in the morning from his ride, full of intelligence he was all haste to communicate to Dacres. He had discovered, he said, an admirable place for them to remove to, viz., Meer Ali Moorad's house. It was empty. It was susceptible of being placed in

a state of defence with a very small outlay of labour. There was a well of water close to the house, and, in fact, it possessed many advantages—and not the least of these was the secret communication with the Saiyad's tomb, which might afford, in case matters turned out unfavourably, and they were attacked or hard pressed, safe retreat—or, at all events, a place of concealment. These were things not to be lost sight of; for, being under the firm impression that assistance would be sent them directly their messenger arrived at Mitterpore, the chief point for consideration was how to provide for their safety during the ensuing eight or ten days.

Dacres lent a willing ear to Harley while he expatiated on the advantages of his scheme, and readily promised to adopt it as soon as it became inexpedient to remain any longer under the protection of their host.

The day passed anxiously. In the afternoon, the Nawab sent to learn the final determination of his guests as to whether they would accept his offer of safe protection for the ladies, while the officers repaired to join the army, or not; and received a decided negative in reply, couched in as courteous terms as was possible. Dacres was glad when the day was over, for he wanted to hear

Asgar Ally's report, and was impatient for the promised interview. The time came at last, and he met Asgar Ally in the same spot where he had spoken with him the night before. He had a dog with him.

'I have much to say to you, sahib, to-night. I durst not come to you before. Even with all the care I have taken to avoid suspicion, I am suspected.'

'By whom—the rabble, the Nawab calls his troops?'

'No; they trust me, at least I believe so; but as you suspected me once, I have brought this dog to prove my fidelity——'

'Nay, I do not suspect you. I did—but after what has happened you cannot wonder at our being slow to put confidence in any of your class. Tell me what you have heard to-day.'

'First let us try the dog.'

So saying, he unfastened a corner of his turban and took out a handful of sweetmeats such as are in common use among the better class of natives as an article of food. 'See here,' he said, showing the sweetmeats in his hand to Dacres. 'His highness was kind enough to send his humble servant to-day, in reward for his faithful service, a tray of sweetmeats, a mark of favour and a token

of friendship; let us see how the dog likes them.'

The animal sniffed at the sweetmeats when they were held out to him in Asgar Ally's open hand, and then rapidly devoured them.

'Now let us watch him,' said the trooper.

It seemed a long time to Dacres that they stood over the dumb animal, anxious as he was to hear more of the intelligence his companion professed to have to communicate; in reality, however, it was not much more than a minute. The dog soon exhibited symptoms of having been poisoned — he fell on the ground, stretched his limbs convulsively for a second or two, howled an unearthly howl and expired.

Asgar Ally, who had been kneeling by him with his head bent down watching closely the animal's struggles, looked up and smiled.

'Did you say the Nawab sent you these?'

'Yes, I said so, and so did the man who gave them to me; but I know they did not come from him.'

'Who sent them?'

'I do not know, I only guess: they were brought me by Sidi Gulzar, the chief eunuch, who attends on his highness's harem.'

'Dacres thought of Amy and shuddered. At that time she was paying her promised

visit to Leila, and had gone to spend the night with her.

'Is it true, sahib,' asked Asgar Ally, 'that one of the ladies frequently visits the Nawab's harem?'

'Yes—and this night she sleeps there.'

'Alla protect her, then!—this is dangerous. Can you get access to the Nawab at any time during the night?'

'Yes—I have but to send to rouse him, and shall have an audience immediately.'

Asgar Ally remained silent.

'There is some plot that I cannot understand,' he said at length, after remaining buried in thought for a short time. 'I will tell you, sahib, all that I know, and your wisdom will be able to interpret what is a sealed mystery to me. All the Nawab's men are excited and hourly awaiting the time when they will be let loose—the only thing that restrains them is the Nawab's authority: but all day long messengers are coming and going between the lines where the men live, and the harem: there is intriguing going on, and I know many of them have received much money, but I believe it did not come from the Nawab, who, in his heart, wishes you well; yet there must be some one in his household who is perpetually throwing fuel on the flame—

I know not who it is—and there is some stranger at this moment who arrived with a considerable retinue just after dark, and entered the palace stealthily by a door used only by the eunuchs of the harem. His horse and attendants are outside, and a palanquin with them.'

'Some friend probably come on a visit to the Nawab—there is nothing in this to excite alarm.'

'You can decide, sahib, better than an ignorant native, as I am, but was there not an attempt made to influence the Nawab against the English officers by a story that one of them had been seen about this private entrance?'

'There was—but I believe the Nawab's suspicions were diverted to another channel; —at any rate, I have heard no more about it.'

'And does this lady go to spend the night in the harem by her own wish?'

'No; she was earnestly pressed to go by the Nawab's wife. He does not, you know, keep a number of concubines, as most Mahometan gentlemen, but lives with one alone, something in the same manner that we Christians do.'

'Is it not a very unusual thing for one of

your ladies to be so intimate with those whose lives are passed in privacy?'

'Yes, it is not the custom: but all our old habits and customs are broken up by this unexpected mutiny.'

'The sahib will not be angry with his servant for offering his advice; but he fears much for the lady's safety. Ah, sahib, I could keep you here all night talking, telling you one thing after another, each of which would astonish you more than the last, about my countrymen. You English gentlemen are very learned in science, and very brave, and very rich; you are lords, rulers of the land, and you think you know a great deal about us; and you think we do not understand you, but that you understand us: but, ignorant as I am, and learned, sahib, as you are, I could teach you many things you will never learn in any other way; no, not if the mutiny had not broken out, and you had gone on ruling the land as you have done for the next thousand years. But the mutiny has come, and wonderful things have happened; and here am I, a poor ignorant trooper, talking to the great English commissioner, while he stands under a tree to listen to me. Ha! ha!' and he laughed outright—'but hear me, sahib,' he resumed, suddenly checking himself in his

rambling and returning to the subject at hand, 'it is dangerous to leave the lady in the Nawab's seraglio all night. You cannot tell what may happen, or what the Nawab may do—Alla alone can read the heart; but I know his men are ready at any moment to break out, and they talk openly among themselves of doing so, and, the cursed black-hearted infidels! of slaying all the English gentlemen—and this may happen any time. Now, I know you English gentlemen are brave as lions and will fight to the last, and perhaps defeat these black-hearted grandchildren of Satan, and save your lives and your families; but if this happen while the lady is away, who shall find her or protect her? Besides, who knows who may have come here to-night?—perhaps it is the Mirza.'

'The Mirza—who is he?'

Asgar Ally laughed. 'I told you, sahib, you knew very little of us, or of what goes on. The Mirza! why, there is not a child of two years old in the city here who does not talk of the Mirza. His name is in everybody's mouth, high and low, rich and poor, soldier and shopkeeper. The Mirza is a wonderful man! a very wonderful man!'

'Who the deuce is this Mirza, then?'

'That, sahib, I cannot tell you; no one

knows who he is. Some say he's a jin, some the son of the king.'

Asgar Ally, as it were incidentally, used the word 'Badshah' for king. This was the title assumed by the old emperors of Delhi, and implied something more than is expressed by our word 'king;' it meant the paramount lord of Hindustan, a title never used by natives with reference to any of the existing sovereigns of India till the mutiny, and when used then it signified the Emperor of Delhi in contradistinction to the British government. The expression attracted Dacres's notice at once, and gave rise to unpleasant though passing suspicions of his companion.

'And some,' continued Asgar Ally, 'say he is the Imam Mehndi, whose appearance in the world is now universally expected by Mahometans; and some say he is the Emperor of Russia in disguise.'

'What do you say he is?' asked Dacres, interrupting him; 'what is the truth out of all this fable?'

'Alla alone knows.'

'Have I ever seen him?'

'Alla knows—perhaps you have, sahib. If you have seen him, you cannot forget him. His skin is fair, very like an Englishman's; and his eyes are blue, and he rides a beautiful

grey Arab mare, worth, they say, a lac of rupees.'

Dacres recalled to mind the incident that had occurred on the night of the mutiny, when he had seen from the gateway of the Nawab's palace a stranger mounted on a splendid mare, with features and complexion very like those described by Asgar Ally.

'They say,' continued Asgar Ally, 'that this mare can swim and fly in the air as well as she can gallop over the plains. Whether this is true or false I know not, but I know that the Mirza comes and goes; one day he is here, and the next he is fifty miles away.'

'Has he been here lately?'

'He is always here and away again. He comes and goes like a jin. He has been all over Hindoostan, and is busy day and night in the service of the Badshah. But if he is here now, and if that retinue at the private entrance of the Nawab's residence be his, and he is within, Alla protect the English lady who is sleeping there! They say he has a beautiful palace somewhere, and a large seraglio, where there are a thousand ladies as beautiful as the houris of paradise, collected from every country, — from Frankistan, and Roos, and Roum, and Iran, and Cashmere. He has a dungeon, too, in the castle, where he has

many thousand prisoners, all kaffirs, and he slays one every day, after putting the unhappy wretch to every kind of dreadful torture. All my countrymen and kinsmen who do not turn against the English are threatened by the leaders of the revolt with being given over to the Mirza, and they are frightened—their liver turns to water even at the mention of his name. If it was not so, many thousands would never have proved faithless to their salt. Many believe the Mirza is a messenger from Alla, and so they fear him; and others believe he is the angel Gabriel, and others think he is Eblis himself: so all fear him alike. In battle he is a second Rustam—in council he has the wisdom of Suleiman.'

'Was it he who was present on that night at Ali Moorad's house, when you discovered the two officers watching you from above? You must know much of the mutineers' plans. How long have you been in the confidence of the leaders of the mutiny? Give us all the information you can, and you shall be well rewarded.'

'I have long ago told all I knew, as you, sahib, must have heard from Captain Stevens; and it is but little: they themselves know little or nothing. The wind is in their heads; and as long as it is, there will be disturbances,

and mutinies, and bloodshed; and prodigies will happen, and every day some wonderful thing will take place—no man can tell any day what may not happen before night, nor in the night what may not happen before morning. A beggar may see the sun rise and be a prince by the time it sets, and a rajah or a lord sahib may lie down at night and rise in the morning a beggar or a slave.—Look, sahib! what is that?'

Dacres looked in the direction indicated. Scarce had he done so, when the ominous sounds but too familiar to their ears in those days when fires had become almost a nightly occurrence, rose in the air, accompanied by shouts and cries from a hundred human voices, 'Fire! fire!' Dacres rushed inside in a moment; Asgar Ally followed. All the sleepers had started to their feet, and were hastily dressing, stumbling in the dark over the bedding and over one another, scrambling for their arms, and hustling on their clothes. At the same time came sounds of confusion, of terror and alarm, from the ladies' room above; children crying, mothers shrieking, wives calling for their husbands. In the garden outside, the sepoys hurried for their arms, and hastened up to the apartments where their officers slept, anxious to make one last struggle

for the commanders they so dearly loved. Faithful even to death, the troopers rushed to saddle their horses; and the dumb beasts, catching the infection of excitement, snorted, neighed, and stamped impatiently. Outside the gate, and from above, came sounds far more ominous—cries of excited men, exciting themselves by their own violence. 'The infidels! massacre the infidels! burn the infidels! bring fire! shoot them down! Alla is great!' and many other cries of similar import, all uttered at once from hundreds of throats, each trying to outvie the other in violence, formed a hideous and frightful din.

Meantime the fire, whose ravages I have so often attempted to describe already in this narrative, spread, but not rapidly. It was in the seraglio that it raged. There were servants, domestics of all ranks, ages, and both sexes, hurrying to and fro in the utmost possible confusion, the women all crying, and the men chattering and shouting, but without any tangible object. They were supposed to be removing the property to a safe place at a distance. And, to complete the confusion, the dogs about the palace barked and howled, while thousands of birds, rooks, pigeons, owls, and kites, frightened out of their roosting-places in the nooks and corners of the roof of

the old house, and the branches of the neighbouring trees, fled wildly about, flapping their wings, hooting and crying, while a dense volume of smoke ascended from the burning pile and filled the air.

As on the deck of a ship freighted with many living souls, when the elements have overcome and shattered the appliances of human art and skill, and the vessel is doomed to be a wreck, the sport of wind and wave, amid the multitude of sounds that are scarce distinguishable from the hoarse roaring of the stormy sea and the violence of the gale, is clearly heard the voice of the captain, calm alone in the midst of such overwhelming confusion, giving orders through the speaking-trumpet, so clear and commanding came the tones of Murray's voice, as he issued his directions to the excited officers and men, through the spacious hall where they were assembled.

These events, though it has taken some little time to write them, and will occupy less to read, in reality passed quickly—nay, almost simultaneously. Murray at the first moment of alarm sprang to his feet, cool and collected, but determined. Graham, as he leapt from his couch, encountered Dacres. Stevens rushed up to the group.

'Where is the fire, Dacres?'

'In the Zenana.'

'Good heavens, Miss Leslie!' cried Graham, half-frantic, but through fear for another's safety, not his own. There was no need to remind Stevens; he and Graham understood one another instinctively.

'Bring all the ladies and children down here, Dacres, will you?' called Murray. 'Barncliffe, take command of the men outside, keep them outside; let all the officers join their men. Harley, Thurston, and you, Burleigh, stay with me. Stevens, Graham,—where are they?'

While Murray makes his hasty arrangements for defence, let us follow Stevens and Graham. Asgar Ally had kept close to Dacres till he turned and bade him follow Stevens, who, accompanied by Graham, rushed up the stairs, through the ladies' room, into the court-yard, now fast filling with an armed rabble, all shouting for the blood of the kaffirs and eager to shed it. Asgar Ally had just time to summon one or two of the sepoys who had forced their way into the officers' room, and, followed by them, hurried after Stevens and Graham, and overtook them just as they emerged into the court-yard. Their first impulse was to cross it; this they did, beating back sword in hand all who opposed their progress. But

there were few, for, truth to tell, the rabble were vigorous enough in shouting 'Death to the kaffirs!' but were very unwilling individually to encounter one of these same kaffirs sword in hand, with a five-barrelled revolver in his belt. They bounded across the court-yard and reached the burning palace, which was immediately opposite the apartment they had emerged from. Arrived here, they were at a loss how to proceed. Where was the entrance? and when once in, whither were they to go in search of Amy? Not an instant was there to spare, not an instant was there lost. Seeing their momentary hesitation, Asgar Ally dashed to the front. 'Follow me, sahib!' he cried, and the next instant he disappeared within a doorway through which the smoke was issuing in volumes. Close after him came Stevens, then Graham, then the faithful few, all rushing blindly into this '*descensus Averni*,' as it looked. On they went, guided by Asgar Ally's footsteps and his voice, the smoke nearly choking them, and the intense heat almost overpowering their vital energies. On they pressed up a narrow stone staircase, along dark passages, then up steps again, and still on and on. The smoke grew less thick, the air less overpoweringly heated—they drew breath afresh and pushed on still more ardently.

It seemed as if they had traversed hundreds of yards—they had not compassed as many feet—suddenly they emerged into a broad passage some ten feet in width, open to the sky; here, hot as the outer air was, it seemed like breathing the breath of life again. They looked round: a few yards to the right, at the end of the passage, was a handsome damask curtain; before it stood some six or eight armed eunuchs. Asgar Ally paused as he found himself suddenly confronted by the points of shining sabres. Graham rushed up; 'Speak,' he cried—'where are the ladies' apartments?'

'Here,' shouted one or two of the eunuchs, pointing to the curtain and grinning as they spoke. At the same time, the whole party, at a signal from a grey-headed old veteran who was their officer, moved forward, ordering, by gesture and command, Graham and his companion to return. Voices were heard within, beyond the curtain, but very faintly. Graham pressed on. The eunuchs still held their ground. It was a fatal moment for one of them, for Graham's sword cleft him almost in two, and struck back the others. As the man fell, Graham passed the group, and rushed at the curtain as if he would have pushed it aside and entered. He came in contact with a door, concealed by the curtain, against which, all

unconscious of anything with greater power of resistance than hanging damask, he hurled himself with all his force. The blow stunned him, and he fell back among the now frightened and enraged Janissaries. Assistance, however, was at hand. Stevens and Asgar Ally were upon them: the conflict was a very short but a savage one, and no sooner had the sepoys appeared, who had kept as close as they could to the English officers, than the party, fearing to be overpowered by numbers, fled. Stevens, however, held fast the leader of them in an iron grasp.

'Open that door, villain!'

The man grinned, and showed his decayed and broken teeth, as he said, 'It is barred on the other side.'

For the whole of them to lend their united strength in forcing it from its hinges was the work of a moment. At such times a man seems to possess twice his ordinary energy and strength.

The door creaked and creaked again: another effort, and it fell in with a loud crash. Graham sat up, feeling faint, but a sense of their position, and the errand of life and death, and more than life and death, on which they had come, nerved him to action; he arose and followed the rest. They had now penetrated,

though by a roundabout way which they had taken in ignorance of the locality, into the Zenana. The confusion here was beyond all description; but so dark was it, that none of the domestics who were hurrying hither and thither took the slightest notice of them. All the busy crowd seemed intent upon, was carrying away valuables and furniture, and chattering as fast as their tongues could go. It was evident that the fire had not been able to make much way among the stone walls of the massive building, where it found much less to feed its fury than in the combustible and dry thatched bungalows; still it had not been entirely subdued. There was more smoke than fire, the heat was overpowering, and escape from that part of the building, though not a matter of life and death, yet was desirable in every way. Alarmed for Amy's safety to such an extent as to overlook entirely all the probable consequences of such an unwonted intrusion into the domestic sanctum of a Mahometan nobleman; desperate, and believing matters had now come to such a pass that all that was left was to try the strength of the little band of lion-hearted Englishmen against the thousands of Asiatics who were thirsting for their destruction,—Stevens, and Graham pushed on, resolved to carry out the

object of their dangerous errand with unfailing determination. Every room whose entrance they passed, they examined, drawing aside the curtain, and scanning with ruthless gaze and uncompromising pertinacity the interior of the *penetralia*, hitherto forbidden ground to all but the lord of the palace, and his eunuchs and female domestics. No vestige, however, of a living soul was to be found in any of the rooms—they were all empty; even the furniture had been removed.

There was but one room, the last in the corridor along which they were hurrying, left. Unlike the others, this was occupied; but they were only just in time, for its last occupant was leaving it by an opposite door when Stevens and Graham entered, being borne out on the shoulders of four men in a handsome covered litter such as ladies of rank use in the East for travelling.

'There is no other room on the floor,' said Stevens, in accents of despair—'we have missed the way—what shall we do?—Oh, Amy! Amy! fool that I was to let you run into the very jaws of destruction!'

'Stay,' said Graham; 'stop that litter!'

'Let go,' he added, as his companion laid his hand on his shoulder to hold him back, 'let me go—I will see who it is!'

'Stop that litter, bring it back!' he called out with a voice of authority.

The bearers looked round. There were two or three lamps burning in the room in handsome silver candelabra, and the rest of the furniture and hangings about the apartment were rich and costly and in keeping, while the air was laden with the most delicious but heavy perfume, that produced an effect upon those unaccustomed to its influence quite indescribable, but none the less real: it seemed to deaden the senses and give rise to a feeling of extreme lassitude, yet mingled with the most pleasurable sensation; you felt almost irresistibly inclined to yield to the luxurious impression, to resign yourself to a dream of pleasure, intoxicated with the ethereal draught of sensual delight.

The litter-bearers, instead of exhibiting any great inclination to return on seeing that it was a sahib who was calling out to them, were all the more anxious to get away. They were urged, too, to the utmost speed by the voices of some unseen persons outside, who were perpetually calling on them to hurry out with their burden.

Graham and Stevens had already committed themselves too far to feel over-nice in the measures they took to carry out their investi-

gation, though the latter even then had been alarmed at first at the youthful impetuosity of his companion, and his rashness in daring to stop and examine a litter that no doubt contained one of the 'tabooed' inmates of the harem. Without further parley, they rushed across the room, and seizing the hinder part of the litter just as it was disappearing behind the curtain, dragged it by main force back into the room. The men in front, not understanding this backward impulse, found themselves compelled to retrograde with it, or to let the front of the litter, which rested on their shoulders, violently to the ground: this they were afraid to do, and so between them Graham and Stevens had their way, and the palanquin was forced back into the apartment and placed on the ground. Meantime, the noise and hubbub outside increased; those who had been urging the men to bring the litter became frantic with impatience, and roared and yelled incessantly—all in vain; the prize was now in the hands of those who were not likely to let it go.

With profane hand, rash and unscrupulous, yet forced by some mysterious impulse to see with his own eyes the occupant of the litter, Graham raised the curtain and threw it over the framework on the top. He started back,

indeed he would have fallen had not Asgar Ally caught him in his arms—a wild cry of agony and despair escaped his lips—he covered his face with his hands and sobbed like a child. Stevens stooped forward, and after one glance at the figure in the litter, threw himself on his knees beside it, and commenced a more calm and close examination than Graham's excited feelings would allow him to make. Calm and still, with her beautiful features fixed and rigid as if Death had laid his dread hand upon her, with her beautiful hair thrown back upon the snowy pillow on which the head rested, lay Amy Leslie. Could it be sleep? sleep amid that hideous uproar—sleep amid such imminent and appalling danger! Yet a closer inspection satisfied Stevens that his sister was not dead; her breathing was calm—her pulse regular, though faint: yet her sleep was not natural—no natural slumber could continue unbroken amid such noise. He turned and called to Graham.

'She sleeps, Graham—it is not death.—Quick, let us bear her hence out of this accursed pandemonium—thank God we came not too late!'

At the bidding of the stronger party who now had possession, the bearers lifted the litter and moved towards the opposite door, the

one Graham and Stevens had entered by. Many were the dangers they had yet to encounter ere they reached a place of safety—safety! where was that to be found?—ere they reached their friends and companions. Stevens went first, sword in hand; Graham followed; Asgar Ally and his little band brought up the rear. Ere they left the apartment, however, they were startled by a fearful outcry at the doorway behind, through which the litter was being borne when their timely arrival secured the prize that was so dear. The curtain was torn down, and, with shouts of rage and fury, a band of four or five armed men rushed in, led by one full a head taller than any of his comrades, with the complexion and features of an Englishman, and habited in the richest and costliest costume of an Asiatic of high rank.

'The Mirza! the Mirza!' shouted Asgar Ally. Graham did not know what he meant, but he had little time for reflection—he saw and understood the danger however, instinctively. The sepoys stood actually paralysed with fear, and not till the dreaded warrior had cut down two of their numbers had the remaining two recovered their senses sufficiently to stand on their defence. Asgar Ally, though pale and trembling, was resolute, and planted

himself sword in hand right in the narrow doorway. Graham pushed the hindermost bearers through, and Stevens dragged the front ones on.

Asgar Ally's courage saved them, for he stayed the pursuit, wondering at the same time at his own daring in venturing to cross swords with the formidable foe he little expected ever to encounter in such close conflict. Single-handed he kept his enemy at bay for a few seconds; meantime the litter had been borne along the passage as many yards. There, joy of joys! they met a party of their friends who had been sent to their assistance. It was Burleigh and Thurston, and half-a-dozen of Murray's faithful irregulars. Thus reinforced, the four Englishmen, even with their prize, which was an awkward thing to convey in safety through such dangers, were more than a match for any enemy likely to attack them. At a word from Stevens, Burleigh pushed forward with the troopers to Asgar Ally's rescue; and his foe, seeing the odds against him, relinquished his design and retreated, followed by his men. Aided by the general confusion and the darkness of the night, increased rather than diminished by the fitful glare that now and then shot up from the burning wing of the palace, the little party succeeded in reaching

the apartment on the opposite side of the court-yard, with their treasure unscathed. They took the litter from the bearers and bore it in themselves—then they placed Amy gently on the ground, and leaving her in the care of her sister and the other ladies, hurried below to see how matters had fared with their companions.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ANOTHER crisis was past and over, and the little band of fugitives was still safe. The Nawab had succeeded, though with difficulty, in restraining and then calming the excitement of the rabble. The danger was postponed for a time. The fire, the origin of which was still a mystery, had been gradually subdued, more from exhausting itself in vain attempts against the stone walls of the palace than from any effective measures taken to put it out. Water, however, was close and easily procured; and there was plenty of it, and many hands to use it. The servants flocked up to the roof of the palace in numbers like bees or ants; every corner, every crevice through which water could be poured to reach the fire, was speedily made available as a channel for it. Everything combustible that could be removed was torn down or taken up and carried off before the flames reached it; but the woodwork, what little there was, the beams, rafters, &c., were all more or less consumed.

When morning dawned, it found the little band of faithful sepoys still under arms, their officers still keeping watch, the ladies still anxious, and Amy still in the same lethargic state. The rabble, who had found their way into the upper court-yard, had been with difficulty driven back by the palace guards, and, once outside, the gates were closed. But the danger of a popular outbreak was so great, and the Nawab's dependence on the fidelity of his men so slender, that he pointed out to Dacres the necessity of the whole of the English officers and their families removing at once from the protection of his roof—which protection, indeed, henceforward existed only in name.

Dacres, too, and his companions saw and acknowledged the necessity. By remaining where they were, they not only attracted danger to their host, but by risking his position and influence—nay, life—they also immeasurably increased the perils that threatened them. It was resolved to move at once the whole party, and all their effects, from the palace to Ali Moorad's house.

Arrangements were immediately entered on. It was given out by the Nawab, and widely disseminated through the crowd of retainers that thronged the neighbourhood of the pa-

lace, and among the city people, that the English officers and ladies were to leave that evening and make the best of their way to Aurungabad. The tale was plausible enough and readily believed, and the anticipated results of this credulity soon became apparent. The armed rabble who were so eagerly bent on effecting the destruction of the little band of heroes and heroines, but who had been hitherto baulked of their prey by the protecting influence of the Nawab, now looked forward to gratifying their evil passions. They ceased their clamour, and left the city in large bodies with the intention of lying in wait on the road, at a spot about twenty miles from Islamabad, where, owing to the difficult and rugged nature of the country, an ambuscade was easily practicable. Carriage for the property and conveyances for the ladies were procured before evening, and it was determined to start on the expedition a little after dark; for a short distance to pursue the Aurungabad road, so as to deceive the city people, and then, making a sudden détour, turn off in the direction of the Sudder Ameen's house. Once there, they depended greatly on the strength of their position. The Nawab lent them an iron six-pounder gun, old and somewhat honeycombed, but still fit to be used; and he promised faith-

fully to do his best to collect supplies and to keep them informed of all that went on. One other arrangement was also fixed upon: it was, that Graham and Harley should start that night and make the best of their way to Aurungabad, represent to the officer commanding there the dangerous position the Islamabad fugitives were placed in, and return as speedily as possible with assistance. By this means they would have hope to fall back upon, in case anything had happened to prevent the first messenger from reaching Mitterpore; and it was probable that on Graham and Harley's personal representations, the pressing urgency of their need would be brought more vividly before their fellow-countrymen. The service was one of extreme peril, but this was a time when no individual thought of his own safety.

One feeling was uppermost in Graham's mind, and that was his anxiety in leaving Amy Leslie, at such a time, encompassed with innumerable dangers. Much to the relief of her sister, who had watched her incessantly since she was brought back—and, indeed, to the relief of all, for all loved her—she exhibited signs of returning consciousness about noon the day following the fire. The recovery of her mental powers was slow and tedious; and it was not till two full hours had elapsed after she began

to show symptoms of awaking, that she was able to sit up, to converse with those around her, and to recall the past. In doing this, however, she was unable to find any clue to the mystery, or to account in any way for the state she was found in. She distinctly recollected conversing with Leila to a late hour. The whole evening her fair hostess had been more than usually affectionate; she had talked to Amy of her former life, of her native land, and dwelt on the reminiscences of past scenes with such tenderness and pathos, that Amy's sympathies were thoroughly awakened, and she smiled when her friend smiled, and mingled her tears with hers when she wept, listening to the fervent outpourings of a heart overflowing with feeling, and the eloquent language of one whom nature had gifted with all the genius of a poetess. Late in the evening, she recollected partaking of some exquisite preserves, after which Leila parted from her while she prepared herself for sleep. She undressed and lay down, and remembered feeling unusually drowsy; the last effort of the mind which left any traces upon her memory, was a kind of vague feeling of disappointment at not being able to keep awake till Leila returned, for they had proposed to sleep together. She sank to rest under the influence of a feeling

of delight she was unable to account for; her senses seemed charmed, and she fancied herself in a kind of paradise where the very air she breathed was fragrant with the most delicious perfumes, while her organs of vision and hearing were entranced with the most exquisite scenes, and sounds of richest melody and sweetest music, that scarce seemed to have an earthly origin. Beyond, all was dream.

The necessary preparations for the move had been completed by the evening, but another hour had to elapse before the time fixed for departure. Amy was reclining in the litter, the very same in which she had made her late escape, in the garden, for she felt too weak and languid to attempt to take any share in the preparations for moving. Graham, booted and spurred, sought her out, determined, before he departed on his perilous expedition, to hear from Amy's lips whether any of the warmth of feeling with which he regarded her was reciprocated. The recent dangers they had passed through, the present perils that surrounded them, had made him bold and callous to the opinions of others. During the last few days, things had been reduced marvellously to one level. All were equals now, except in those possessions of the mind and body that nature alone can give; and in these

Graham was—as he always had been—rich. Of worldly wealth he had but little, but what was the value of worldly goods? They were to be reckoned as the fainting traveller in the desert who sinks exhausted to die, alone and friendless, might value precious stones or the rich merchandise from the land of wealth: a cup of water would to him be cheaply purchased at the price of tens of millions. Under their present circumstances, little was of value beyond a strong arm, a stout constitution, a cool head, and presence of mind. All else was worthless.

It seemed a strange coincidence that Amy and Graham met under the very same tree where he had held that conference which Stevens related in the opening chapter of this narrative. How short a time had really passed since then! and yet it seemed like years.

'I am glad you are come,' she said, as Graham seated himself on the ground beside the litter. 'I have not thanked you—oh, how can I thank you? I owe my life—more, much more than my life—to you. What would have been my fate, had you not persevered in spite of danger?' and she covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out the hideous visions which fancy conjured up.

'Don't think of it, Miss Leslie, more than

you can help. It was a miracle almost we saved you, and were saved ourselves. Let us hope it is an earnest of deliverance from dangers just as great that still encompass us. I and Harley start to-night for Aurungabad to see if we can bring you aid.'

'To-night! This is a sudden determination, is it not? Oh, how will you ever get there? Oh, why did they choose you for that dangerous duty?'

'No one chose me, Miss Leslie; I volunteered. My only dislike to the duty is, that I must leave you—you, surrounded with so many perils—and we may never meet again; nay, sanguine as I am, and much as I try to hope for the best, I cannot help feeling we shall never see one another again, Amy; and this is why I have been bold enough to seek you out, to tell you something—to tell you how long and how truly I have loved you. We are all equals now. This dreadful mutiny has given a new value to things. What was before worth much is now worthless. Your brother and sister would not hear of my suit before, because I was poor——'

'Do not blame them,' said Amy, perceiving that he spoke of her relations with some bitterness. 'They did what they thought was best. It was my fault. Oh, how I have blamed my-

self, how we all ought to blame ourselves, flirting and feasting, and talking nonsense, and living as if life had no duties or responsibilities, on the very verge of a volcano!'

'We did not see the danger, Amy. There was no moral guilt in our being blind and living as people ordinarily do, so long as our pursuits were innocent. The way in which you and one or two others have braved danger when you suddenly met it face to face—ay, and death, too—shows that you were prepared—fitted to encounter it, at any rate. But, Amy, if we do survive these troubles—if we do, which may God grant! get over all these difficulties,—then, tell me, shall I be the same to you as I was before this began?'

'Time enough to talk about that when we have survived them—when we can look back and talk of them as things that were. It seems little short of profanity now, with death absolutely staring us in the face, to think of such a thing as our own selfish happiness. It is more than probable that we shall be attacked to-night and all murdered on the road.'

'Harley and myself go with you as far as the house—the road so far is in our way: I do not think there is any chance of our being attacked—I know Dacres does not think so.

Once there, you will be safer than you could be anywhere else, much safer than here, and you will be more comfortable too.'

'But how shall you travel—shall you not go disguised?'

'No, we have determined not to; disguise is useless, because we cannot keep it up. We shall avoid exposing ourselves as much as possible—spend the day under trees and in the shade. We have two camels; Harley and I ride one, and we take a man on the other with food, such as it is. We ought to do it in six or eight days.'

'Why do you go to Aurungabad? why don't you go to Mitterpore—isn't it nearer?'

'A little—yes, it is nearer, but it is a much more dangerous country to get through. Between this and Aurungabad it is almost all jungle; the other way we should have to pass tracks of villages and towns. Besides, going to Aurungabad is a kind of double string to one's bow. Perhaps assistance will reach you from Mitterpore before we return—I hope so; and when we meet again, O tell me, will you, do you love me?'

I am aware that it is not at all the proper thing for young ladies in novels to make any verbal response to such momentous questions as these. Amy, however, was an exception,

and she did answer in very straightforward, matter-of-fact, and plain English, though blushing as she spoke, and with trembling voice:—

'Yes—I will—I do—and I owe you my life, that is more; but I do not see the slightest hope of our ever being anything more to one another than we are—in this world.'

'Anything more! nay, this is all—a mountain-load of care is removed from my heart: no, except for your sake, and what all these poor ladies and children too must suffer and have suffered—and the men, too, as to that matter—I feel as if I did not care for danger; I feel, at any rate, with it all—though I know it is very wrong—but I do feel much happier than I did before. Life was all a blank to me then; now what a future if life is spared!'

'One thought I love to dwell upon,' said Amy. 'What danger, to human sight, could be greater than that I escaped last night? and yet I did escape. The same Providence that watched over me then may deliver us from still greater perils, if greater there can be, in time to come.'

'My poor mother used to say that; so I have heard my father tell me. She was a French lady, you know, and as nearly as possible wounded in the streets of her native town

in La Vendée, when the republican soldiers took the place and shot down or bayoneted all the inhabitants they found: she was in the street at the time they charged, and the balls whistled round her in thousands, but she escaped unhurt. Then she was a little girl, and afterwards when in danger very like ours now, she comforted herself to the very last—'I escaped greater risk than this, and we shall get out of this too."'

'And she did?'

'No, alas! she fell in the massacre, and my life was with difficulty saved. I was then quite young, but I recollect it all, and it has cast a cloud over my life, as it was likely to.'

'How dreadful! Had you any brother and sister there? was your sister that I have heard you talk about so often there?'

'No; she was at home. I had no brother; at least, there was one, but he had turned out badly, broke his father's heart almost, and nothing has been heard of him for thirty years.'

'What became of him?'

'We never knew. He went to Russia, so it was said; that was the last we ever heard of him: he was killed in some drunken brawl, most likely.—Hark! I hear Murray's voice, and the men are falling in. I will ride by the

side of your palanquin, Amy, and be with you till we part.'

'Yes, do.'

Silently and sadly, aided by the light of the moon, the party set forth, keeping pretty much the same order of march as they had adopted on their way to the palace. The sepoys' muskets were all loaded, and their bayonets fixed, and the little band of Irregulars marched with their swords drawn. Knowing as they did the hostile feeling of the population in the city, and of the Nawab's men, they were right to take every possible precaution. It was difficult, indeed, to overrate the danger of their position. Many thought they should none of them survive that night. Stevens rode by the side of his wife's palanquin; how dear to him the treasures it contained! never so dearly prized as since danger had threatened them. The two little children were lying, one on each side of their mother, fast asleep, little dreaming of the perils that beset them, or the wearing anxiety of the fondly-loving parents who watched them. There was one feeling in common: they all prayed that if one fell, all might fall together.

Graham rode by Amy's palanquin, trying to make the most of the precious moments. The march was very slow; for they were forced to

allow their baggage-carts and camels to keep up with them, for the sake of protection. Indeed, if not watched, the cart and camel drivers would have made off with their effects, believing, as every native in and about the city, except the Nawab, did, that the little band of fugitives were doomed, and were marching to certain destruction.

Strange to say, in spite of the threatening aspect of affairs, Graham felt a lightness of heart and buoyancy of spirits to which he had long been a stranger. The horizon of the future *would* look bright to him, distrust it as he might, though again and again he repelled the thought as unsuited to the external aspect of affairs.

It required, however, but little philosophy to explain the cause of Graham's lightness of heart amid such universal sorrow and anxiety. He had confessed his love, and found that he was loved in return; and if my readers cannot understand his feelings, it is useless for me to try to make them. 'Come what will,' he thought, 'it is something to have lived for, to have won such love as hers;' and if evil should befall her and death stand between him and his love, would not death speedily reunite them in a world where there was no parting? So thought Graham, and so he tried to teach Amy

to think as they conversed in under-tones, almost in whispers, while the melancholy procession wended its way along the road in the silence of the night, that silence only broken by the occasional word of command and the clanking of accoutrements. Even the animals seemed to feel the depressing influence of the anxiety that weighed heavily that night on many a brave heart. As for the natives, they dared not open their lips to speak aloud; strict silence was enjoined, and the officers in command kept their faculties strained to the utmost to catch the slightest sound or symptom of approaching danger. Every now and then they halted; and Murray and Dacres and one or two others rode on a little distance in front, to see if the road was clear; while mounted scouts on each flank kept at a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the column, with orders to bring intelligence of anything that betokened danger. Too well they knew there was an ambuscade laid already for them, but in a place they had no intention of approaching. Had there been but one traitor in their force, had a word been overheard or a hint been given of their real destination, there was little doubt that the enemy's plans would be changed, and that they would be surrounded and cut to pieces. Was there a

traitor among them? Was Asgar Ally true? These thoughts recurred to Dacres again and again that night. How long it seemed—how utterly interminable the short distance they had planned to go towards the spot where the enemy awaited them, before they turned off in a different direction! Why, every quarter of a mile seemed twenty, every half-hour a whole night; and what if daylight surprised them on their stealthy march—what if baggage-cattle fell, or carts broke down, or carriages upset, or palanquin-bearers threw their loads and ran away? Nay, what if the neighing of a horse should give the enemy intelligence of their real direction? From many a heart that night arose the prayer—breathed or neglected often in bygone times, where nothing was more distant or unlikely to be met with than danger of any kind—'By Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.' How many times that night did Dacres, from his large, manly heart, thank God that he was spared the bitter cup of agony which so many of his friends were draining to the dregs!—the agony of suspense a brave unselfish heart alone can feel, when those it loves are beset with untold, uncounted perils.

Once, and once only, did the native cattle-

drivers evince the slightest sign of disobedience or mutiny, and that was when the cavalcade reached the point where their road was to turn; they did reach it at last, though it seemed to most of the officers as if they never would, and bent their course at right angles away from the direction in which it was supposed they were to go, when the driver of the foremost cart hesitated, then stopped, then began to turn his bullocks out of the road, then to remonstrate; all the rest began to do the same, and evince signs of open disobedience. One chance Dacres gave the first recusant, and one only. He pointed to the road he was to go, and bade the man take it and be silent. He began to chatter somewhat too loudly to be convenient, and like parrots or rooks all the rest began to chatter too. Dacres's sword-blade flashed for a moment in the moonbeams, and the unhappy bullock-driver lay stretched upon the sandy road: his place was filled by the owner of the next cart. Every tongue was hushed, and in silence deeper than before the cavalcade wended its way along the new track.

Before the first streak of daylight had appeared in the horizon, the whole party had reached their destination in safety, and all the

officers, aided by the sepoys and irregulars, were busily engaged in adding by every possible means in their power to the defences of the place.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was the second day after the events related in the last chapter occurred. The rays of the burning sun poured with unintermitting fury on the arid earth; the wind blew in gusts, hot as from a furnace seven times heated, bearing with it fine sand, itself heated as if it had been taken out of a fire or discharged from a volcano. As far as the eye could reach there stretched interminable jungle—a desert—not the sandy desert the imagination is so apt to picture to the English reader whenever the word is met with in books of Eastern or African travels, but what we call more expressively in India, jungle—a hard, unfruitful soil —hard from being baked day after day in the sun, unfruitful because unirrigated. For miles and miles there is no sign of human habitation, not a speck of cultivation, not a drop of water, —not the smallest elevation of the ground to relieve the eye, wearied with scanning the dreary expanse of one uniform level: no large

trees with spreading branches and green foliage afford a grateful shade to the parched traveller and his exhausted beast; but innumerable stunted shrubs, all about the same size, that is, from five to six or seven feet in height, and about two or three feet apart from each other, with scanty leaves half withered from lack of moisture, and thorny branches, complete the dreary character of the same unvaried, uninteresting scene. Here and there a country-cart track marks the road from some distant point to another; but woe betide the wayfarer who has lost the road and trusts to this track to guide him! for it will lead him in and out, round and round the bushes, away and back again, and end in disappearing altogether, leaving him bewildered and distracted. In the intense fiery heat of an Indian summer's mid-day in one of these desert wastes, you fancy you can feel the caloric in the air as some tangible material body diffused through it. The dazzling glare, utterly indescribable in words, almost blinds the unhappy wretch who is exposed to it in such a spot. The burning ground throws off the heat into his face, like the scorching of a kitchen fire, till, after a short time, the skin begins to peel off—the sand penetrates into the pores of his skin, into his hair, eyes, and ears—perspiration

streams from him, and the most agonising thirst is added to the suffering against which the weakened and exhausted frame is scarce able to struggle. The light appears to be a living thing, all round; the air impregnated with it dances and glitters all day long. Philosophers doubtless can give a scientific explanation of the phenomenon; I only attempt to describe it for the benefit of those who have not seen it. The heated surface of the earth, heated to a degree not easily believed or understood by those who have not witnessed it, produces some effect in the rarefaction of the air that causes the dancing, dazzling motion I have alluded to. It is very closely allied to the mirage, though not exactly the same thing: —the mirage, however, is always there, to deceive any one simple enough to be deceived into believing that a lake or pond of water stretches out in front of him. The intense silence that reigns in these solitudes at such times is a striking characteristic of them. Not a sound is there to break the monotony. The brute creation has succumbed under the intolerable heat; you see nothing stirring except the air and the light in their perpetual dance. The leaves of the shrubs indeed move in the wind, but give forth no sound. The animal you were riding is exhausted like yourself,

and lies still, in silent, patient suffering, on the burning ground.

The difficulty of steering one's course aright across the wastes is very great; once off the high road, if there is a high road, or once out of the country track and ignorant of the direction you should go in, you are lost. Small indeed is the chance of meeting a human being from whom you can enquire. The only plan is to push on; waiting during the heat of the day under the largest shrub you can find for the benefit of the scanty shade it may afford, and travelling all night till you reach a village; and never leave it till you get a guide to put you in the road. Most people, however, riding across such a country, take care to determine beforehand the direction in which their destination lies; this can always be compared with the points of the compass, and either by night or day the traveller knows that, the more perseveringly he presses on, the sooner he will reach human habitations and get assistance.

It was through such a scene as I have attempted to give the Western reader a faint notion of, that a small party were wending their way. There were two camels, the foremost ridden by two Englishmen, the other by a native. The animals were nearly as ex-

hausted as the riders, for it was now mid-day and the heat was unbearable. Still they toiled on and on, mostly in silence, for they had hardly strength to speak; the camels stumbled as they moved their weary limbs, scarce lifting their huge spongy feet off the ground so as to avoid the slight inequalities formed by the hidden roots of stunted or withered shrubs. The party were Harley and Graham on the first camel, and their faithful attendant, Rumbheer Singh, on the second. Harley at last spoke; he was riding behind Graham, who drove, as it is called, the camel, that is, held the rein (a thin cord attached to a kind of bit passed through the animal's nostril), which enables the camel-rider to guide and control the beast.

'How far do you think we've come, Graham? I can't go much further; I can't, indeed.'

'Nonsense, man! you're not half a traveller. However, it is pretty nearly time we stopped. We've come steadily since our last halt at sunrise, and must have made fourteen miles.'

'Good heavens! not more than that?'

'Not so much, as the crow flies. See how we have been going in and out, round and round these cursed bushes—it was a bad job for us that we got off the road in the dark last night. And at times, do you know, I

begin to be afraid we are not steering the right course, after all.'

'We made a good thirty miles the first day, and last night we must have made a good twenty more; we have done a fourth of our distance, don't you think so?'

'Yes, if we are going right, that's all.'

Again they relapsed into silence and jogged on as before: at last Harley spoke again; his voice was faint.

'I say, Graham——'

'Well?'

'I shall not survive this journey; I feel so ill.'

Graham looked round and with some difficulty saw his friend's features, for they sat close together one behind the other; the glance he got was enough to decide him at once. With whip and spur he put the weary camel into a trot.

'Don't, for God's sake, Graham; gently—you don't know how ill I am.'

'All right,' said Graham, making the camel kneel down under the largest shrub he could see, which they had just reached, as he had guided the camel to it directly it caught his eye. 'Hold on for a moment: stay, I'll help you down.'

He jumped off as he spoke, just in time to

catch Harley in his arms as he fell senseless from the saddle.

Rumbheer Singh very soon saw what was the matter. He stopped his camel, dismounted, and ran to see if he could be of any assistance.

'Any water there, Rumbheer Singh?' asked Graham, as he deposited Harley on the hot burning ground in the shade, and supported his head in his lap.

'A little in the water-jar,' said the Hindoo, reaching his master the precious store.

He poured it into his hand, and dashed it in Harley's face: he made no signs of recovery.

'A sun-stroke,' said Rumbheer Singh.

'Yes, indeed,' said Graham, sighing as he thought of his friend's exposed situation, and the little aid within reach, and his own solitary condition.

'God help us! what shall I do?' The water was all gone. He sent Rumbheer Singh to look about and see if there was by chance a pool anywhere near: alas! it was but a chance.

'Even thus,' thought Graham, 'some four thousand years ago, the fond mother, footsore and wearied, laid down her little one to die of thirst and fatigue and heat, and retired, that she might not witness the last sufferings of

him she so dearly loved. There was a God there, nigh at hand, and the angel came and pointed out where water lay. Is there no God here?'

He checked the impious thought, an arrow from the hand of the evil spirit, who then, as once before, tempted one in the desert to doubt the providence of God.

'Man doth not live by bread alone,' said Graham to himself, 'but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

These words came almost of themselves from his lips. He bent his head over the pale, still features of the sufferer, and the tears fell hot and fast.

'No water, sahib,' said Rumbheer Singh. It was like a sentence of death.

'God has forsaken us—there is no God—else why has he deserted us?' came the winged shaft of temptation right into his inmost soul.

What helpless creatures we are when affliction strikes us down, and there is no human aid at hand, and science and art are unavailing, and there is no resource to fall back upon, and faith grows weak and love cold! How the soul bows down, bows and bends like the elastic reed!—thank God, to rise again erect when the blast is over and the temptation has swept itself by like the simoom. But what havoc

does that simoom commit in its passage over us! How our treasured hopes lie withered! our vows and promises we watched like green buds, glistening in the dews of spring, fall off, not one by one, but by clusters, blasted and dead; the heartfelt prayers we fondly trusted in to pierce the gate of heaven, like too full-blown blossoms that drop their petals to the ground, fall lifeless and dead too, and heaven seems shut against us, and earth has deserted us, and we impiously ask ourselves, 'why were we created?'

Again and again did Graham try to call to mind any directions he had ever heard or read of for dealing with cases of *coup-de-soleil* where no medical aid was at hand. He thought of bleeding; that he might try—it might end fatally, or it might afford relief; it was the only remedy he could think of, and Harley seemed getting worse and worse. There could be little hope that his present condition would result in anything but death, and that in a few hours. Yet every minute the sun seemed to be getting hotter and hotter, and each blast more burning and furnace-like than the last. It was terrible—it was hard enough for one in health to resist it—struck down as his companion was, yet exposed to the intensity of the mid-day sun, with no appliance or means of

affording relief at hand, his chance seemed small indeed. He resolved to try bleeding.

With his penknife he cut a slit in Harley's coat and shirt-seams, and laid bare the arm. He then made a deep incision, and the blood began to flow freely.

The relief afforded was almost instantaneous; the sufferer breathed more easily, moved a little, and finally opened his eyes, but closed them again directly—the glare was so intense, gazing as he was into the open sky. He groaned once or twice and raised his other arm, for Graham held the one he had operated on, as if feeling for some one. Graham took his hand; he pressed it.

'Where am I?' he said by-and-by, in a faint voice. 'Oh, ah—I recollect—I say! Graham.'

'Yes.'

'How fearfully hot it is! Oh God!—water—water!—get me some water, there's a good fellow.'

'We haven't a drop, Harley; would to Heaven we had! I threw the last drop out of the jar over your face and head, hoping 'twould revive you. How do you feel?'

He sighed, then after a pause said—

'Graham!'

'Yes.'

'It's all over with me, old fellow!—give us your hand'—he had dropped it.

'You will be better when the sun goes down; it will be less intense—the heat;—I have stopped the bleeding—not to weaken you too much.'

'Bleeding! what, did I fall?'

'No; I opened the vein in your arm—till that you were insensible.'

'You should have let me be; why restore me to consciousness? Oh God! it is hard to die thus.'

'Don't talk of dying,' said Graham, turning away his face, for his tears were falling fast, and he did not wish them to drop on Harley's burning face.

'It is hopeless, Graham—it is God's will. Oh! I feel that dreadful heaviness coming on again—such—a weight—here;' and he pointed to his head. He was silent for a time; then opened his eyes and said—

'God bless you, Graham!'

Graham pressed his hand; he could do no more—he dared not trust himself to speak. Harley went on after a pause, articulating his words slowly and with difficulty, stopping constantly as if endeavouring to connect the train of thought.

'Write to my mother, Graham—tell her—

how—it was—all about it, you know—I thought of her at the last—God bless her!—don't leave me.'

His eyes were now wide open. Graham shaded them with his hand.

'Doesn't the glare hurt you?'

'No—no—move your hand—there is no glare now—the sun has gone down—it will soon be dark. Don't leave me, Graham—that stupor is coming on again: say a prayer—I can attend to you, though I can't speak.'

He spoke no more, though his mouth frequently moved as if he was attempting to say something, or perhaps following with his lips the earnest supplications his companion repeated, drawing on his memory for all the petitions he could recollect from the Prayer-book. Emotion almost checked his speech and caused his memory to fail. He trusted to the heart and let it guide his lips; and so in that burning desert, with the fiery sun pouring its white hot rays upon his throbbing head and fevered face, with the holy words of heavenly love and mercy in his ear, Harley breathed his last. Death was upon him ere Graham recognised his immediate approach, and the soul of his friend had winged its way to another world, and the speaker's words fell on an unheeding ear as he repeated—

'In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, Good Lord deliver us.'

The first thing that aroused Graham from the overpowering sensation of loneliness and desolation, to the necessity for immediate action, was the voice and touch of Rumbheer Singh.

'Sahib,' he said,—'sahib!'

Graham looked up.

'The sahib's life is gone,' he said, abruptly, pointing to Harley's body, which was lying in the same position, the head still on Graham's lap. 'We must take care of our own: the sun is going down; if we do not find water before to-morrow, we shall die too.'

Graham perceived at once the force of the man's remark. Exertion was absolutely necessary: the sun was now sinking towards the horizon, and every minute its rays became less oppressive and dangerous, but the intensity of the heat abated in no perceptible degree. Graham arose and laid his friend's head gently on the ground, never to rise again till the voice of the archangel shall summon it to life.

He then took his sword and endeavoured to dig up the earth, with the intention of burying Harley, for the idea of leaving his friend's body there to be devoured by wild beasts was

too horrible to be entertained. The ground, however, was like iron or stone; a quarter of an hour's labour, with such inefficient tools as he had, had produced no visible effect. It would take him a week at least, and he felt that he was losing strength every half-hour. Since Harley's illness had first come on, he had not given a thought to his own condition; now he felt it—the most agonising thirst, accompanied by great bodily weakness, came on in full force. He staggered and almost fell.

Rumbheer Singh was very nearly as much exhausted as his master, but, having felt less mental anguish, was more capable of viewing their condition correctly, and appreciating the necessity for action. He dragged Graham to the camel and urged him with the voice of authority to mount. Graham broke from him and returned once more to Harley's body. He took everything he had in his pocket, as keepsakes; threw his coat over his face, and, with a shudder at the thought of the havoc that would so soon be committed on that fine manly form by the wild beasts of the jungle, he suffered himself to be led away.

They both mounted the same camel; Rumbheer Singh was afraid to trust his young master alone, and it was as well to let one camel go

empty and so give it more rest; so Graham took the leading-string of the second, Rumbheer Singh mounted the first, and, rousing up the animals, they trotted off, leaving Harley alone under the bush.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AURUNGABAD was a very important station, for it boasted a seat of government and a large garrison. It was here that the great dignitary, the Prefect of the Central Provinces, held his court: and a fine court it was. There was a large civil society, too—no end of board-of-revenue officers, and sudder judges, commissioners, judges, and magistrates; while the number of secretaries and deputies, and the host of uncovenanted clerks, would take me a long time to reckon.

The garrison consisted of a troop of European horse artillery, a (royal) regiment of European infantry, four of native, and a corps of native irregular cavalry besides.

There were, in addition, two battalions of police, consisting each of eight hundred men, and a force, when counted up, of five hundred chuprassies, as they are called in India, that is, men paid by government for swelling the retinue of civilians and certain staff officers. Their chief occupation was to stand

behind the chairs of magistrates, collectors, judges, &c., when at office; to lounge about the doorways and impede the free circulation of air; to carry about notes; run—creep, I should say—on errands; look after the children, take them out for their morning and evening walk and ride, and perform other duties and services, usually the lot of paid domestics, but in India performed by the servants of the state; the government having, in compassion, I suppose, to its proverbially underpaid officials, taken upon itself the burden of providing for the pay and support of one portion of the Anglo-Indian's household.

The Indian government always acted on the time-honoured maxim, 'Expense no object.' It had discovered an excellent system for managing its finances, to wit, perpetual loans, by which its far-seeing financiers imagined they were producing capital and conducting the administration on the most improved principles of political economy. At Aurungabad you saw the glories of the old régime carried out to perfection. The civilians' residences, or civil lines, as they were collectively called, were almost five miles from the military garrison. The civilians

lived in splendid houses in the midst of immense compounds that might have been called parks if they had not been wildernesses. Their stables and outhouses formed a goodly row of buildings, neat and clean, while the interior of the mansions were supplied with every luxury that money could procure. And then their dinner-parties! Such feasts! the worst feature about them was that they were too costly and magnificent, and the tables too much crowded. Champagne and the most expensive wines flowed in profusion. Paris and London confectionery art helped to furnish the tables: delicacies brought hermetically sealed fifteen thousand miles were consumed, I might almost say, wholesale. There was plenty of good feeling, and the guests were received with a warmth and hospitality peculiar to India and the colonies, but there was withal a great deal of formality and stiffness. The ladies were taken into dinner by the gentlemen according to the rank of each with as much precision as if they were peers and peeresses at a state banquet at Windsor or Buckingham Palace. And when the time came for the guests to depart, the first lady present made the first move. Had Mrs. Smith, who ranked next below Mrs. Jones,

because Mr. Smith was officiating only in the Sudder Board, whereas Mr. Jones had been permanently appointed in the *Prefect's Gazette* a month before,—had Mrs. Smith, I say, at one of these parties risen to take her departure before Mrs. Jones, I think it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the whole party present would have been thunderstruck.

You would meet at these entertainments almost an equal number of military officers and civilians; the two classes amalgamated so far. Caste, which is almost as arbitrary in its rules and distinctions among the English residents in India as it is among the Hindoos, did not forbid the two classes from eating and drinking together, and from social intercourse so far as paying and returning morning visits went; but beyond this the separation was clear and distinct. Each class had its own subjects of interest, and neither felt disposed to interfere with the other. They all got on very happily and comfortably together—saw as much of one another perhaps as was good for them; the poorer members of society ate the good dinners and drank the champagne of the richer, and felt thankful, and overlooked a little *hauteur*, and a little of that purse-proud spirit which the man who has three or four thousand a year will always *seem*

to exhibit to another whose income is as many hundred, whether he really has it or not.

The head of society at Aurungabad of course was the Prefect, the Honourable George Gregory, Esq., C.S., who had written C.S. after his name for five-and-thirty years. He had not been out of India for twenty-five years; indeed, he had only been once to Europe during his whole term of service for six months, for he found, when forced to go home for his health after being seven or eight years in India, that society in England was so little to his taste, that he only stayed long enough to pay a short visit to his several relations, and then, six months having been spent in this way, he returned to Egypt and lived there till the expiration of his leave, when, with liver and mind both reduced in compass, he returned to the scene of his labours.

He was always noted as a rising man, was Mr. Gregory. He was possessed of all the requirements and qualities that in a Bengal civilian of the old school insured success in life. He was plodding and persevering, and a good hand with his pen. He would write off a report of seven or eight sheets of foolscap, on the driest subject in the world, in the driest official style, and the driest divisions into paragraphs, that delighted the heart of

governor-generals and councils. Yet he was not exactly what you would call a red-tapist, nor a circumlocution office man: he would go straight to his point, first having mastered the case in all its bearings (so far as they could be viewed from one side at least); he would put it on record in the most comprehensive way, and at the same time in good language and style. He was a great civilian, but far from being a great man; in fact, as a man he was little in proportion as he was great as a civilian. His mind was essentially a narrow one; narrowed by education, narrowed by prejudice, narrowed by routine, narrowed by his lot in the world, that had kept him for the best years of his life at a small out-of-the-way place, where he saw no society but his brother-civilians, and half-a-dozen others in different branches of the services. He studied India till he could study it no more, but he studied it only from one view. He had studied the natives in the same way: he had solved the question of Indian land tenures, of revenue, of the law of evidence, of the operation of the system of government upon the people,—in fact, one and all of the innumerable subjects connected with the administration,—but he had studied them all from the same point of view —and that was one which gave him but a

narrow glimpse. In fact, he was an instance of the Indian system carried out to absolute perfection. So little idea had he of the real state of the country, so little practical knowledge of the subject in which he thought himself, and was always supposed to be, perfect, that when the mutiny came—a mutiny which must have been a result brought about gradually by causes that had been in active operation for years—so thunderstruck was he, that his mind never thoroughly recovered the first great blow.

The Honourable George Gregory had his social prejudices as well as his official. Thoroughly persuaded was he that the system of land-tenure in vogue in the Central Provinces—a system which the merest tyro in political economy who had studied the subject on broader grounds than those which excluded every writer's and every statesman's views, except of one particular school, would have seen was rotten to the very core—thoroughly persuaded as he was that the system was perfection, he was equally certain that his own views of social duties were correct too. Rather than sit down at the same table with an uncovenanted man, he would have cut his right hand off; rather than let his daughter wed a military man, he would have preferred follow-

ing her to the grave. And he carried out his principles, too.

Julia Gregory was a beautiful girl when she first came out. Before she had landed in Calcutta, half-a-dozen hearts were broken; and though she was only in Calcutta a week, she had received seven offers before she left,—none of your common offers—your mates of ships and captains of marching regiments, and such fry—but real good fat ones: a couple of sudder judges, two millionaire merchants, and a barrister with large practice which brought him more than a member of Council's place was worth; and another, the head of a large agency house, a most worthy man, a shining light in certain religious circles, who was always to be seen presiding at every missionary meeting, heading the lists of subscription for charities with handsome sums, and who astonished his friends one day, a short time after his hand had been refused by Julia Gregory, by absconding with a couple of hundred thousand pounds, the property of retired officers, indigent orphans and widows, committed to his trust, with which he purchased a fine estate in England, and lived courted and respected, while the orphans and widows starved.

However, Julia Gregory got to Aurungabad, and there most inconsiderately lost her heart

to—my pen will scarce write the word—to a subaltern of a native regiment. Her mother was her confidant: she implored her on bended knees for whole hours together to take her part, and plead her cause; her darling Henry had her heart's affections—him she would wed, or die a maiden. Ah me! it is a tale often told before—I don't know what business I have got to repeat it. Her tears and entreaties softened the mother's heart, and no wonder: there were not many mortals who could have held out against Julia Gregory; in smiles she was dangerous—in tears unconquerable—to all but her own father.

The mother and daughter repaired to the father's study, who laid down his pen as he was in the midst of a report on revised settlements, and kissed his wife and daughter affectionately.

'Well, dears?' he said.

Julia's heart sank; she looked imploringly at her mother.

Why waste words or lengthen out this tale? The story was told—a story of pure, honest, loving hearts. The Honourable George smiled, looked longingly at his revised settlements, and asked the name.

'Mr. Salford,' said the mother—how Julia blushed!

'Salford—Salford—I don't recollect the name—what term was he?'

The two ladies were silent, perhaps they didn't know what 'term' meant.

'What term was he? when did he leave Haileybury, you know?'

There was a pause.

'He never was at Haileybury, papa,' said Julia at length, hesitatingly.

'Never at Haileybury!'

'No, papa; but he was at Addiscombe.'

Had a large snake fallen on Mr. Gregory's neck, he could not have jumped up from his chair more hurriedly. Not only did he jump up, but in his agitation he spilt the ink all over the revised settlements, putting further revision out of the question, and knocked over his chair.

'Good heavens! at Addiscombe!' he stammered, gasping for breath. 'What do you mean, Julia? do you mean—do you mean—that you have dis—disgraced yourself and the whole service by listening to the suit of a creature from Addiscombe? And you, Mrs. Gregory!' —this was the only time during a married life of twenty years he had ever called her Mrs. Gregory—'how can you approve or advocate such a *mésalliance*?—for shame! I may

follow you to the grave, Julia, but I will never, never sanction such a disgraceful match.'

* * * * *

Time heals many wounds, and works many wonders. Julia eventually became the wife of the judge of the famous place Buggypoor—an easy-going old gentleman, very hospitable, very kind to his wife, very fat, and exceedingly stupid.

'Well, to be sure!' exclaimed Mrs. Gregory one morning at breakfast about ten months after her daughter's wedding, as she was reading the *Delhi Gazette.*

'What, Maria?' said her husband, without stopping his morning's labour of opening envelope after envelope from a large heap of letters on the table before him.

'There is the 77th ordered to Buggypoor!'

'Well, it's a nice place for them; Julia will be kind to the young men, I dare say.'

'That's Mr. Salford's regiment, that is why I felt so much interest in it,' said Mrs. Gregory.

'Oh!' said her husband, and thought no more on the subject.

Six months later, Mrs. Gregory saw something else in the *Delhi Gazette* that caused her a little more emotion. It was the account of an elopement—of Lieut. Salford of the 77th

N. I. with the pretty judge's wife of Buggypoor.

'It can't be helped, Maria,' was Mr. Gregory's comment after the first gush of feeling was over: 'we did our best for Julia, and she married in the service.'

From that time Julia was as if she were dead to her parents.

CHAPTER XL.

When the mutiny burst upon the astonished residents at Aurungabad, it burst, as it did in most other places, like a storm which no one had observed to be gathering upon the horizon. Officers, civil and military, were totally unprepared: the events at Delhi, Meerut, and other places were no warnings to them: they were local *émeutes* arising from local grievances, fostered by local mismanagement. The civil officers at Aurungabad had better information. Their native subordinates were trustworthy honest men, and gave information that was to be depended on. The officers in command of native corps were sure of the fidelity of their men. Several of the oldest commissioned and non-commissioned native officers had assured their European superiors that, so far from the men objecting to use the cartridges, they were prepared to swallow them, ball and all, if only their European officers, who were their fathers and mothers, ordered them to do so. And in this way the belief in

the fidelity of the troops, and the well-affected spirit of the civil police, &c. &c., was encouraged to the last moment. One night, however, they were much surprised by alarm-bugles and signal-guns: all was confusion, trepidation, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and universal muddle, in the midst of which the native troops alone preserving order and presence of mind, quietly formed themselves into a column, elected their own native officers, frightened away the European commanders, and leaving a few men to burn as many bungalows and massacre as many unarmed old pensioners, their families and children, as they could without danger to themselves, marched out of the station at dead of night towards Delhi.

After they had got clear away, the European troops were set in motion under the orders of Brigadier Littlesole. It was determined to surround the mutineers and cut them up to a man, so H. M.'s 159th Regiment of Foot marched out by one road for about a mile clear of the station, and then took a fresh direction to the right. The troop of horse artillery, also European, marched out at the same time by another road parallel to the first, and, having gone the same distance, made a détour to the left. It was pitch dark, and both

columns felt their way cautiously across the fields over the hedges and through the ditches. By-and-by, each of the commandants became conscious he was approaching a body of armed men immediately in his front. The halt was sounded by the officer commanding the artillery: his guns were in a field overlooking a broad road flanked by hedges, and on the opposite side of the road he was sure must be the enemy. No sooner had his trumpet sounded the halt, than the enemy's bugles sounded a halt also. The artillery unlimbered and prepared for action, and in an incredibly short space of time, with that speed and precision for which the Bengal Horse Artillery is justly famed, poured several discharges of grape into the enemy's ranks. Meanwhile, the officer commanding the enemy, which was the 159th Regiment of Foot, hearing his enemy in his immediate front preparing for action, made his men load, and, as there were guns opposed to them, lie down on their faces. After the first discharge of grape, which knocked over about ten rank-and-file, whose curiosity would not admit of their remaining flat on their bellies, but forced them to sit up and look at what was going on, as if they could see anything in the pitchy darkness, up jumped the gallant 159th at the word of command, and

poured a destructive file fire of musketry into the artillery, which disabled fourteen men and twenty horses, and then lay down again to load. This time they all lay flat, and the grape passed over their heads without doing any damage except killing all the doolie-bearers, who by some miracle had escaped the first round. How long this would have gone on I do not know, had not an inquisitive bugler left the ranks (for which he afterwards got fourteen days' pack-drill), scrambled through the hedge, crossed the road, and climbed up the hedge on the other side. Then, seeing the true state of the case, with great presence of mind he sounded the 'cease firing.' A stray bugler, close to the horse artillery and coming from the enemy's camp, had not much chance; he was surrounded and captured. On being examined by the officer commanding, and asked who he was, he made a military salute, and said he belonged to Her Majesty's 159th Regiment of Foot.

'You young blackguard!' says the officer, 'what made you desert and join the mutineers?—you shall be flogged first, and then hanged.' His words were cut short by an ominous rattling and movement from the other side of the road.

'Look out, my men,' cried the artillery

officer; 'lie down.' They lay down, and the leaden shower passed over their heads, but twelve more horses were *hors de combat.*

'Now tell me,' said the artillery officer to his prisoner, 'before you are hanged, what strength are the enemy?'

'Plase yer honor, sir,' said the bugler, ''tis Her Majesty's 159th Regiment, the wrong side of the hedge.'

'The deuce it is!' said the officer, jumping up and rushing down the bank, roaring out at the same time, 'Cease firing there!—we're friends.'

Mutual explanations followed, and the column returned to cantonments, with their killed and wounded, it being deemed undesirable to follow up the mutineers any further.

This gallant feat of arms was thus chronicled in despatches:—

'*To Captain Trumps, Brigade Major, Aurungabad.*

'SIR,—I have the honour to report, for the information of Brigadier Littlesole, that in pursuance of the verbal instructions received from him, I marched with the 159th Foot, 900 bayonets, on the night of the — June, 1857, in pursuit of the mutineers. The pursuit was kept up over very heavy and difficult

ground for two hours. Unfortunately, owing to the extreme darkness of the night, and the difficulty of finding the road, combined with the want of correct information, I was unable to effect the total destruction of the enemy; but he must have suffered very considerable loss, owing to the rapidity of his flight, accelerated by the rapid and well-sustained pursuit kept up by Her Majesty's 159th.

'I have the honour to annex the accompanying list of casualties.

'I cannot conclude this brief despatch without begging Brigadier Littlesole to bring to the favourable notice of government the very efficient aid rendered by the following officers.' (Here follows a list of all the officers of the 159th Foot, and the serjeant-major.)

'I have the honour to be, Sir,

'Your most obedient servant,

'ROBERT KNICKERBOCKER, Lt.-Col.,

'Commanding Her Majesty's 159th Foot.'

A similar despatch to the above, *mutatis mutandis*, was sent in by Captain Portfire, commanding the artillery. In due course of time (for I may as well conclude in this place the history of the battle of Aurungabad), Colonel Knickerbocker, and all the officers of the

159th, and horse artillery above the grade of lieutenant, received a step of brevet rank. Colonel Knickerbocker was made a C.B. The sergeant-major got an ensign's commission, and Brigadier Littlesole received a handsome autograph letter from the Governor-General, conveying to him and the officers under him the thanks of the Governor-General in Council for their distinguished services.

Meantime the widows and orphans of the killed and wounded were put on the pension-list, and the battle of Aurungabad took its place in the glorious annals of Anglo-Indian warfare.

The reader will be anxious to know how the civil residents fared during this crisis.

As soon as the mutiny broke out in the garrison, the two battalions of police and the five hundred chuprassies, along with the jail guard (100 men), declared they had had enough of the service of the British government, revolted, and released the prisoners from the central jail, 2,000 desperate villains ready for any crime.

The civilians, at the first alarm, by common consent, assembled with all their families at the judge's cutchery, or court-house, a large building of solid masonry, not easily destroyed by fire. The uncovenanted servants of go-

vernment, English and Eurasian clerks, and others, mustered altogether 150 men, most of them mounted, and all armed in some fashion. The covenanted civilians, from the judges of the Sudder Board down to the extra assistant to the collector, also mounted and armed themselves, and leaving a few to take charge of the court-house and its defenceless inmates, the whole body sallied out against the rebels. The latter by this time had swelled to an almost countless multitude; an armed rabble, excited by fanaticism, and thirsting for plunder. The elements of stability, however, were wanting. The civilians, headed by one of the sudder judges, John Bowlemover by name, a large, heavy, stout man, mounted on a splendid Arab (which had carried him through many a jungle after many a hog), armed with a duck-gun loaded with a double charge, a hog-spear and hunting-knife stuck in his belt, and followed by the whole posse of brother-judges, magistrates, collectors, revenue officers, assistants, deputy-collectors, uncovenanted clerks, and sudder pleaders, all well mounted, and following each other exactly in the order enumerated here, sallied forth against the rebels. They came upon them in some open country about a mile from the station.

'Now for them!' shouted the leader, and

brandishing his hog-spear, away he went full tilt across country, followed up by the judges, magistrates, collectors, revenue officers, assistants, deputy-collectors, uncovenanted clerks, and sudder pleaders. Like an avenging host of mounted Goths under their Attila, they closed upon the foe, while the clerks and sudder pleaders, being fully aware of the effect of noise in combating with a semi-barbarous enemy, just as they saw the front rank of their squadron within a few paces of the hostile host, set up a deafening shout of 'Sudder Dewanny and Nizamut Adawlut! to the charge!' This formidable war-cry, yelled out with all possible energy, struck terror into the hearts of the rabble. They waved to and fro like a surging sea; finally threw down their arms, and fled pell-mell across country into some ravines hard by. The pursuers came up with the hindermost, knocked down several, and took many prisoners, whom they were, however, forced to let go immediately afterwards, not knowing what to do with them.

Bowlemover could not keep up with his companions; for, having encountered a very fat jail darogah (a head jail official), who, as he could not fly, determined to show fight, ran him through with his hog-spear and pinned

him to the ground; but when he tried to get his spear out, he found the greatest difficulty in doing so, the man all the time striking at his antagonist dangerous blows with his gilt-handled sword. The civilian's efforts were much impeded by the uncontrollable fit of laughter brought on by the consideration of the ridiculous position circumstances had placed him in, and being unable to get out of the difficulty any other way, he had recourse at last to his duck-gun, and lodged its contents in the head of his fallen enemy.

After these operations, the civilians returned to the court-house, and made the best disposition they could for their common safety by deputing separate parties to patrol the different roads. The rebels also returned in great numbers, picked up the arms they had thrown away, and straggled off in tens and twenties towards Delhi.

Aurungabad boasted, as I have said elsewhere, a strong fortress, built on elevated ground overlooking the whole surrounding country, encompassed by strong massive stone works, ditches, &c., and all the defensive outworks ordinarily constructed for the protection of a well-fortified place. Inside this fort there was a magazine, stocked with ammunition, ordnance stores, cannon, arms, &c. &c., to an

almost fabulous amount. This important post was always entrusted to a guard of fifty sepoys, under a subadar. Besides the guard, however, which was relieved every week, there resided in the fort three subordinates in the ordnance department; to wit, conductor John Brown, with his two assistants, sub-conductors Edward Smith and Samuel Jones. When the mutiny broke out, the native guard stood to their arms, shut the fort gate, and declared the place to be in possession of the loyal soldiers of the Emperor of Hindoostan. The news spread apace. The conductor and his assistants soon heard what had happened, and soon determined on their course of action. There was a nine-pounder brass gun, mounted on a carriage, which was used for firing the mid-day, evening, and morning gun, a heavier piece of ordnance being stationed in cantonments for the same purpose. They loaded this gun with grape, and wheeled it to within a few hundred yards of the gate held by the mutinous sepoys. The two sub-conductors took their posts at the gun, with a torch and port-fire ready lighted. Brown gave his orders, which were that the two assistants should stand ready to fire; when they heard him speak, they were to light the torch and hold it so that the gun might become plainly visible; on his firing his mus-

ket, they were to fire the gun, and then act as circumstances might direct.

After giving his orders, Brown, like a lion-hearted fellow that he was, went boldly up to the gate. The mutineers called to him to know who he was, and shouted out that they would fire on him. He then called out; the instant after, the light from the blazing torch brought out the muzzle of the nine-pounder directed point-blank at the mutineers. 'Now,' said the conductor, addressing the leader of the rebels in Hindoostanee, 'lay down your arms and go quietly out of the fort, or I give the word, and my men will fire grape into you.'

They hesitated; several loaded their muskets, others crept up to the gate and opened the wicket quietly. The subadar laughed at the man's threat, thinking it very unlikely he would direct his own men to fire grape upon them, when he himself would necessarily be the first victim. One or two levelled their muskets.

'Take care,' said the conductor. 'The signal is the discharge of a musket; fire on me, and you are all dead men.'

There was a laugh of derision; a musket was fired, the bullet whistled harmlessly by his ear.

'God help us!' cried Brown, and threw

himself on his face: there was a flash, a roar, a spattering of leaden hail, shrieks, curses, and confusion.

Smith and Jones ran to the assistance of their gallant friend. They found him sitting up unharmed, except by a flesh-wound in the leg; but all round about were lying ten or twenty of the sepoys, some dead, others wounded, others dying. The rest had left their arms and fled. They put the wounded men outside the wicket-gate, and then closed it, picked up the arms, and returned to the gun, from which they fired several rounds of blank ammunition to give the alarm. But alarms were so plentiful that night, that theirs passed unheeded; and so the fort of Aurungabad, with all its military stores and enormous magazine, was saved.

The day following the outbreak at Aurungabad, two councils of war were held,—one at Government House, attended by the civilians, and one at Brigadier Littlesole's quarters, attended by all officers of and above the rank of captain. The result of the former was a peremptory order to the brigadier to march the European troops under his command down to the civil lines, for the protection of the government records, the civilians, and their families. The order reached the military

council as they were sitting in debate. It was determined to send a calm but resolute refusal to obey the requisition: 'The brigadier required all the troops for the protection of cantonments and the fort; but if the Prefect would direct all the civil officers, establishments, and families to move down to cantonments, efficient protection should be extended to them there.'

The military council, after sitting for three hours, determined on sending a telegraphic message to government at Calcutta, asking for orders. This was done, and the meeting adjourned to assemble again in the evening and hear the reply, which would probably be received by that time.

The Prefect's council also determined upon telegraphing to the supreme government, and accordingly the following message was sent to the telegraph office for transmission:—

'*From Government, Central Provinces, to Governor-General, Calcutta.*

'Troops mutinied; Brigadier Littlesole refuses to cooperate; troops have no head. Reply urgently needed.'

In consequence of the signaller's presence of mind being somewhat disturbed by recent

events, the latter message was put into the hands of the Governor-General running thus:

'Troops mutinied; Brigadier Littlesole refuses to eat; Trumps cut off his head.'

Both councils having been summoned to meet in the evening to hear and consider upon the reply to their messages, assembled at the appointed hour. The replies had arrived, and were read out, one by Brigadier Littlesole to his subordinates, and the other by the Prefect to his.

They were both alike, and ran thus:

'*From Supreme Government, Calcutta, to Brigadier Littlesole; to Hon. George Gregory, Esq., C.S., &c.*

'Message received. The Governor-General will consider it.'

The councils then separated for the night.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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